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# THEOLOGY;

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IN A

# SERIES OF SERMONS;

BY

TIMOTHY DWIGHT, S. T. D. LL. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

WITH A

## MEMOIR

OF

## THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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# CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.


Page

SERMON XXXIX. Divinity of Christ. Objections answered.—1 *Cor.* iii. 29. 5

SERMON XL. Divinity of Christ. Objections to the Doctrine of the Unitarians.—1 *Cor.* iii. 20. - - - - - - - 20

SERMON XLI. Divinity of Christ. Objections to the Mode in which the Unitarians conduct the controversy.—1 *Cor.* iii. 20. - - - 35

SERMON XLII. Incarnation of Christ.—*Rom.* viii. 3. - - - 50

SERMON XLIII. Covenant of Redemption.—*Is.* liii.10—12. - - 63

SERMON XLIV. Christ a Prophet. His Personal Preaching.—*Luke* xxiv. 19. 74

SERMON XLV. Christ a Prophet. The Things which He taught.—*John* vii. 46. - - - - - - - - - - - 87

SERMON XLVI. Christ a Prophet. The Manner in His Preaching.—*John* vii. 46. - - - - - - - - - - 99

SERMON XLVII. Christ a Prophet. Consequences of His Preaching.—*John* vii. 46. - - - - - - - - - 110

SERMON XLVIII. Christ a Prophet. Preaching of the Apostles. *Mark* xvi. 15, 16, 20. - - - - - - - - - 120

SERMON XLIX. Christ a Prophet. Preaching of the Apostles.—*Mark* xvi. 15, 16, 20. - - - - - - - - - 131

SERMON L. Priesthood of Christ. Origin, Office, and Character of the Priesthood.—*Psalm* cx. 4. - - - - - - - 143

SERMON LI. Priesthood of Christ. His Holiness of Character.—*Heb.* vii. 26. 153

SERMON LII. Priesthood of Christ. His Self-Government.—*Heb.* vii. 26. 162

SERMON LIII. Priesthood of Christ. His Holiness. Importance of this Attribute.—*Heb.* vii. 26. - - - - - - - 172

SERMON LIV. Priesthood of Christ. His Example.—1 *John* ii. 5. - 183

SERMON LV. Priesthood of Christ. His Atonement. Its Nature, Necessity, and Reality.—*Rom.* iii. 24—26. - - - - 194

SERMON LVI. Priesthood of Christ. His Atonement. The Manner in which it was performed. Its Extent.—*Rom.* iii. 24—26. - - 205

SERMON LVII. Priesthood of Christ. His Atonement. Objections answered.—*Rom.* iii. 24—26. - - - - - - 219

SERMON LVIII. Priesthood of Christ. His Intercession.—*Heb.* vii. 24, 25. 230

SERMON LIX. Christ a King.—*Eph.* i. 20—22. - - - - 241

SERMON LX. The Miracles of Christ.—*Acts* ii. 22. - - - 253

SERMON LXI. The Resurrection of Christ.—*Acts* iii. 15. - - 264

SERMON LXII. The Resurrection of Christ.—*Acts* iii. 15. - 274

SERMON LXIII. The Amiableness of Christ in Publishing the Gospel to Mankind.—*Is.* lii. 7. - - - - - - - - 287

SERMON LXIV. Justification. The Nature: or in what it consists. The Source: the Free Grace of God.—*Rom.* iii. 24. - - - 300

SERMON LXV. Justification. The Means. Faith in Christ. The Duty of Believing.—*Rom.* iii. 28. - - - - - - - 312

Page
SERMON LXVI. Justification. The Nature of Faith.—*Rom.* iii. 28. - 324
SERMON LXVII. The Influence of Faith in our Justification.—*Rom.* iii. 28. 338
SERMON LXVIII. Reconciliation of Paul and James. Influence of Works in our Justification.—*James* ii. 24. - - - - 348
SERMON LXIX. Justification by Faith does not lessen the Obligations, or the Motives, to Obedience.—*Rom* iii. 31. - - - - 358
SERMON LXX. Regeneration. The Agent in effecting it: The Holy Ghost: His Character.—*Tit.* iii. 5. - - - - - 370
SERMON LXXI. Regeneration. Testimonies to the Doctrine of the Trinity from the ancient Christians, Jews, and Heathen.—*Is.* xlviii. 16. 381
SERMON LXXII. Regeneration. Agency of the Holy Ghost.—*Tit.* iii. 5. 395
SERMON LXXIII. Regeneration. Its Necessity and Reality.—*John* iii. 3. 406
SERMON LXXIV. Regeneration. Its Nature.—*John* iii. 3. - - 418
SERMON LXXV. Regeneration.—Its Antecedents.—*Acts* xvi. 29, 30. - 430
SERMON LXXVI. Regeneration. Its Attendants generally considered.—*Eph.* iv. 22—24. - - - - - - - - 444
SERMON LXXVII. Regeneration. Its Attendants: Faith; Repentance.—*Matt.* xxvii. 3—5. - - - - - - - - 455
SERMON LXXVIII. Regeneration. Its Attendants: Love; Nature of Love; Evidence of its Existence.—*Gal.* v. 22. - - - 465
SERMON LXXIX. Regeneration. Its Attendants; Consistency of Benevolence with providing peculiarly for our own.—1 *Tim.* v. 8. - 477
SERMON LXXX. Regeneration. Its Attendants: Consistency of Benevolence with seeking salvation.—*Rom.* ii. 6, 7. - - - - 487
SERMON LXXXI. Regeneration. Its Attendants; Brotherly Love.—*John* xiii. 34. - - - - - - - - 497
SERMON LXXXII. Regeneration. Its Consequences; Adoption.—1 *John* iii. 2. - - - - - - - - - - 507
SERMON LXXXIII. Regeneration. Its Consequences; Sanctification.—*Thess.* v. 23. - - - - - - - - - 517
SERMON LXXXIV. Regeneration. Its Consequences; Peace of Conscience. *John* xiv. 27. - - - - - - - 528
SERMON LXXXV. Regeneration. Its Consequences; Joy in the Holy Ghost.—*Rom.* xiv. 17. - - - - - - - 538
SERMON LXXXVI. Regeneration. Its Consequences: Increase of Grace. *Prov.* iv. 8. - - - - - - - - - 547

# SERMON XXXIX.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

CORINTHIANS iii. 20.—*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*

IN the eighteenth verse of this chapter, *St. Paul* says, *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise, in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*

These words, together with the text, are paraphrased by *Doddridge* in the following manner: "I know there are those among you, whose pride and self-conceit may lead them to despise this admonition, especially as coming from me; but *let no man deceive himself* with vain speculations of his own worth and abilities. If any one of you *seem to be wise in this world*, if he value himself on what is commonly called wisdom among *Jews* or *Gentiles; let him become a fool, that he may be wise indeed.* Let him humbly acknowledge his own natural ignorance and folly; and embrace that Gospel, which the wisdom of the world proudly and vainly derides as foolishness, if he desire to approve himself really and substantially wise, and to reap at last the honours and rewards of those, who are truly so, in the sight of God. *For* all *the* boasted *wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;* who with one glance sees through all its vanity; as it is written, (Job v. 13) *He entangleth the wise in their own* crafty *artifice;* often ruining them by those designs, which they had formed with the utmost efforts of human policy, and were most intent upon executing. And again it is said, elsewhere, Psalm xciv. 11, *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain.* He sees how they ensnare themselves in their own subtleties; and, when they think themselves most sagacious, are only amused with their own sophistry and deceit."

This paraphrase expresses, exactly, my own views concerning these declarations of *St. Paul:* declarations, which appear to me to be continually, and abundantly, verified by experience. No man is in the way to true wisdom, who does not first *become*, in the Apostle's sense, *a fool;* that is, who has not a just and affecting consciousness of his own ignorance and weakness, his utter inability to devise a system of Religion, or to amend that, which God

has taught; and who is not altogether willing to submit his own opinions to the dictates of Inspiration.

Concerning the text it will be only necessary to observe, that the word διαλογισμους, translated *thoughts*, is properly rendered *reasonings;* and that the word, translated *the wise*, is σοφων; denoting *the learned men* of *Greece*, and ultimately of other countries, most usually called *Philosophers*. *The reasonings* of these men, as the Apostle proves from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, are in the sight of God *vain;* or utterly incapable of accomplishing the end, to which they were then chiefly directed; viz. *the formation and establishment of a sound Theological system.*

What was true of these men in ancient times is equally true of men of the same sort in every age. Modern wise men are no more able to perform this work than ancient ones. Hence, the proposition in the text is written in the absolute, or universal form; and extends this character to the reasonings of all men, employed either in making systems of Theology, or in amending that, which is revealed by God.

Of the truth of this declaration experience has furnished the most abundant evidence. The great body of such systems, including all, which have been originally devised by man, and which have existed long enough to be thoroughly examined, have been successively exploded; and, as objects of belief, forgotten. Those, which have been devised for the purpose of amending the Scriptural system, have been generally of the same frail and perishing character. Some of them, however, under the wing of that divine authority, which by their abetters was supposed to shelter them; and under the garb of sacredness which was lent them by their inventers; have lasted longer, and been more frequently revived. New forms have in the latter case been given to them; new arguments suggested in their behalf; and the splendour of new and respectable names has been employed to recommend them to mankind. After all, their existence and their influence, have been generally limited by bounds comparatively narrow.

From the nature of the subject the same truth is completely evident. Theology is *the science of the will of God concerning the duty, and destination, of man.* What the will of God is concerning these subjects cannot possibly be known, unless he is pleased to disclose it. That it is disclosed by him in the works of Creation and Providence in a very imperfect degree, and that it cannot be discovered by man beyond that degree, must be admitted by every one, who would make even a plausible pretension to good sense, or candour. All that remains undiscovered in this way, must be unknown, unless revealed by the good pleasure of God. When thus revealed, it can never be safely added to, diminished, nor otherwise in any maner altered, by man. To him, whatever God is pleased to withhold must be unknown. By him, whatever God is pleased to reveal must be unalterable, either as to form or sub-

stance; for no authority, less than infinite, can change that, which infinite authority has been pleased to establish. As, therefore, the Scriptural System of Theology could not have been invented by man; so neither can it possibly be amended by man. In the strong, but accurately just, language of *St. Paul* on this subject, *Let God be* acknowledged to be *true; but* let *every man*, who denies, or opposes, what he has revealed, be accounted *a liar*. Or in the still stronger language of the same Apostle, *Though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel, let him be anathema.*

Among the various denominations of men, denoted in the text by *the wise, whose reasonings are vain*, are included, so far as I can discern, the *Arians* and *Socinians;* or, as both sometimes choose to term themselves, *Unitarians*. I feel myself obliged to warn my audience, that this name however, contains in itself an error; and appears to have been formed with a design to deceive. It was professedly assumed for the purpose of challenging to those, who assumed it, the exclusive character, among Christians, of believing in the Unity of God; and of denying particularly, that *Trinitarians* entertain this belief: whereas *Trinitarians* believe in the Unity of God as entirely, and absolutely, as their opposers. That every *Trinitarian* asserts this of himself, every *Unitarian*, possessing a very moderate share of information, *knows;* and he knows also, that the charge of admitting more Gods than one cannot be fastened upon the Trinitarian; except by consequences, professedly derived from his doctrine, which he utterly disclaims. To prove, that such consequences do indeed follow from it, is, if it can be done, altogether fair, and unobjectionable; but to charge him with admitting them, while he utterly disclaims them, is unworthy of a disputant, assuming the character of a Christian.

For the assertion, which I have made above, concerning the *Unitarians*, generally, I am bound to give my reasons. This I intend to do without disguise, or softening; but at the same time with moderation and candour. My observations I shall distribute under two heads: *Answers to the Objections of the Unitarians against the doctrine of the Trinity; and Objections to the Doctrine of Unitarians, and to their Conduct in managing the controversy.* It will not be supposed, that under either of these heads very numerous, or very minute, articles can find a place in such a system of discourses. All, that can be attempted, is to exhibit a summary view of such particulars, as are plainly of serious importance.

In the present discourse, it is my design to *answer the principal objections of Unitarians against the doctrine of the Trinity.* Of these the

1st. *And as I conceive, the fundamental one, on which their chief reliance is placed, is, That the doctrine of the Trinity, or of Three Persons in One God, is self-contradictory.*

This objection, therefore, merits a particular answer.

Those, who make this objection to the public, express them-

selves in such language as the following: *The Father, according to the Trinitarian doctrine, is God; The Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. Here are three, each of whom is God. Three cannot be One, three units cannot be one unit.* Were this objection made professedly, as it is actually, against the inconsistency of *Tritheism* with the unity of God, it would be valid and unanswerable. Equally valid would it be against the *Trinitarians*, if they admitted the existence of three Gods; or if their doctrine involved this as a consequence. But the former of these is not true; and the latter has not been, and, it is presumed, cannot be, shown. Until it shall be shown, every *Trinitarian* must necessarily feel, that this objection is altogether inapplicable to his own case; and, although intended against *his* faith is really aimed against another, and very distant object. Until this be shown, this objection will, I apprehend, be completely avoided in the following manner.

1st. *The admission of three infinitely perfect Beings does not at all imply the existence of more Gods than one.*

This proposition may, perhaps, startle such persons, on both sides of the question, as have not turned their attention to the subject; but can, I apprehend, be nevertheless, shown to be true. It is clearly certain that the nature, the attributes, the views, the volitions, and the agency of three Beings, infinitely perfect, must be exactly the same. They would, alike, be self-existent, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and possessed of the same boundless moral excellence. Of course, they would think exactly the same things, choose the same things, and do the same things. There would, therefore, be a perfect oneness of character and conduct in the three; and to the universe of creatures they would sustain but one and the same Relation; and be absolutely but one Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Ruler, and Final Cause. In other words they would be absolutely One God. This radical objection, therefore, is, even in this sense, of no validity.

2dly. *The Doctrine of the Trinity does not involve the existence of Three Infinite Beings; and therefore this objection does not affect it.*

The Scriptural account of JEHOVAH, as received by every *Trinitarian*, is, *that He is one perfect Existence, underived and unlimited; and that this one perfect Existence is in the Scriptures declared to be, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* These, in the usual language of Trinitarians, are styled *Persons*, because, in the Scriptures, the three personal pronouns, *I, Thou*, and *He*, are on every proper occasion applied to them. As this is done by the Father and the Son, speaking *to* each other, and *of* the Holy Ghost; and by the Holy Ghost, speaking of the Father and of the Son; we are perfectly assured, that this language is in the strictest sense proper. Still, no Trinitarian supposes, that the word, *Person*, conveys an adequate idea of the thing here intended: much less that, when it is applied to God, it denotes the same thing, as when

applied to created beings. As the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished; some term, generally expressing this distinction, seems necessary, to those, who would mark it, when speaking of the Three together. This term, therefore, warranted in the manner above mentioned, has been chosen by *Trinitarians*, as answering this purpose, so far as it can be answered by human language.

If I am asked, as I probably shall be, what is the exact meaning of the word *Person* in this case; I answer, that I do not know. Here the Unitarian usually triumphs over his antagonist. But the triumph is without foundation, or reason. If I ask in return, "What is the human Soul?" or "the human Body?" He is obliged to answer, that *he* does not know. If he says, that the soul is Organized Matter, endowed with the powers of thinking and acting: I ask again, what is that Organization? and, What is that Matter? To these questions he is utterly unable to furnish any answer.

Should he ask again, to what purpose is the admission of the term, if its signification is unknown? I answer: To what purpose is the admission of the word *Matter*, if its signification is unknown? I further answer, that the term in dispute serves to convey, briefly and conveniently, the things intended by the doctrine; viz. that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; that these are Three in one sense, and One in another. The sense in which they are three, and yet one, we do not, and cannot, understand. Still we understand the fact; and on this fact depend the truth, and meaning, of the whole Scriptural system. If Christ be God, he is also a Saviour; if not, there is no intelligible sense, in which he can sustain this title, or the character which it denotes.

In addition to this, He is asserted in the Scriptures to be God, in every form of expression, and implication; from the beginning to the end; as plainly as language can admit; and so fully, and variously, that, if we deny these assertions their proper force, by denying that he is God, we must, by the same mode of construction, deny any thing, and every thing, which the Scriptures contain. If the declarations, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;* and *Christ, who is over all things, God, blessed for ever;* do not prove Christ to be God; the declaration, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,* does not prove, that there was a Creation; or that the Creator is God. The declaration, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which is made,* is as full a proof, that Christ is the Creator, as *that*, just quoted from Genesis, that the Creator is God. An admission, or denial, of the one, ought, therefore, if we would treat the several parts of the Bible alike, and preserve any consistency of construction, to be accompanied by a similar admission, or denial of the other. Here, then, is a reason for acknowledging Christ to be God, of the highest kind; viz. *that God has declared this truth in the most explicit manner.*

The *Mysteriousness* of the truth, thus declared, furnishes not even

a shadow of Reason for either denial, or doubt. That God can be One in one sense, and Three in another, is unquestionable. Whatever that sense is, if the declaration be true; and one, which God has thought it proper to make in the Scriptures; and one, therefore, to which he has required our belief; it is, of course, a declaration, incalculably important to mankind, and *worthy of all acceptation.*

The futility and emptiness of this fundamental objection of Unitarians, as applied to the doctrine of the Trinity, is susceptible of an absolute and easy demonstration; notwithstanding the objection itself claims the character of intuitive certainty. It is intuitively certain, or in other language, self-evident, that no proposition can be seen to be either true, or false, unless the mind possess the ideas, out of which it is formed, so far as to discern whether they agree, or disagree. The proposition, asserted by *Trinitarians*, and denied by *Unitarians*, is *that God is Tri-personal.* The ideas, intended by the words *God*, here denoting the infinite Existence; and *Tri-personal;* are not, and cannot be possessed by any man. Neither *Trinitarians* nor *Unitarians*, therefore, can, by any possible effort of the understanding, discern whether this proposition be true, or false; or whether the ideas, denoted by the words *God and Tri-personal*, agree, or disagree. Until this can be done, it is perfectly nugatory, either to assert or deny, this proposition, as an object of intellectual discernment, or Philosophical inquiry. Where the mind has not ideas, it cannot compare them; where it cannot compare them, it cannot discern their agreement or disagreement; and of course it can form out of them no proposition, whose truth, or falsehood, it can at all perceive. Thus this boasted objection is so far from being conclusive, or even formidable; that it is wholly without force, or application.

After all that has been said, it may still be asked; "Why, if this proposition be thus unintelligible, do *Trinitarians* adopt it as an essential part of their creed? I answer, "Because God has declared it." Should it be asked, "Of what use is a proposition, thus unintelligible?" I answer, "Of inestimable use:" and this answer I explain in the following manner. The unintelligibleness of this doctrine lies in the nature of the thing, which it declares, and not in the fact declared. The nature of the thing declared is absolutely unintelligible; but the fact is, in a certain degree, understood without difficulty. *What God is*, as One, or as Three in One, is perfectly undiscernible by us. Of *the existence*, thus described, we have no conception. But the assertions, *that He is One*, and *that He is Three in One*, are easily comprehended. The propositions, that *the Father is God*, that *the Son is God*, that *the Holy Ghost is God;* and that *these Three are One God;* are equally intelligible with the proposition, that *there is One God.* On these propositions, understood as facts, and received on the credit of the divine Witness, and not as discerned by mental spe-

culation, is dependent the whole system of Christianity.—The importance of the doctrine is therefore supreme.

The utmost amount of all, that can be said against the doctrine of the Trinity, *is, that it is mysterious, or inexplicable.* A mystery, and a mystery as to its nature wholly inexplicable, it is cheerfully acknowledged to be by every *Trinitarian:* but no *Trinitarian* will, on that account, admit, that it ought to be less an object of his belief. Were the faith, or even the knowledge, of man usually conversant about objects, which are not mysterious; mysteriousness might, with a better face, be objected against the doctrine of the Trinity. But mystery envelopes almost all the objects of both. We believe, nay, we know, the existence of one God; and are able to prove him self-existent, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, unchangeable, and eternal. But no more absolute mysteries exist, than in the being, nature, and attributes, of God. The Soul of Man, the Body of Man, a Vegetable, an Atom, are all subjects filled with mysteries; and about them all a Child may ask questions, which no Philosopher can answer. That God, therefore, should *in his existence* involve many mysteries, inexplicable by us, is so far from violating, or stumbling, a rational faith, that it ought to be presumed. The contrary doctrine would be still more mysterious, and far more shock a rational mind.

"As to the doctrine of the Trinity," says a Writer* of distinguished abilities and eloquence, "it is even more amazing, than that of the Incarnation: yet, prodigious and amazing as it is, such is the incomprehensible nature of God, that I believe it will be extremely difficult to prove from thence, that it cannot possibly be true. The point seems to be above the reach of Reason, and too wide for the grasp of human understanding. However, I have often observed, in thinking of the eternity and immensity of God; of his remaining from eternity to the production of the first creature, without a world to govern, or a single being to manifest his goodness to; of the motives that determined him to call his creatures into being; why they operated when they did, and not before; of his raising up intelligent beings, whose wickedness and misery he foresaw; of the state in which his relative attributes, justice, bounty, and mercy, remained through an immense space of duration, before he had produced any creatures, to exercise them towards; in thinking, I say, of these unfathomable matters, and of his raising so many myriads of spirits, and such prodigious masses of matter, out of nothing; I am lost, and astonished, as much as in the contemplation of the Trinity. There is but a small distance in the scale of being between a *mite* and *me:* although that which is food to me is a world to him, we mess, notwithstanding, on the same cheese, breathe the same air, and are generated much in the same manner; yet how incomprehensible must my

* Skelton. Deism Revealed; Dial. 6

nature and actions be to him! He can take but a small part of me with his eye at once; and it would be the work of his life to make the tour of my arm; I can eat up his world, immense as it seems to him, at a few meals: he, poor reptile! cannot tell, but there may be a thousand distinct beings, or persons, such as mites can conceive, in so great a being. By this comparison I find myself vastly capacious and comprehensive; and begin to swell still bigger with pride and high thoughts; but the moment I lift up my mind to God, between whom and me there is an infinite distance; then I myself become a mite, or something infinitely less; I shrink almost into nothing. I can follow him but one or two steps in his lowest and plainest works, till all becomes mystery, and matter of amazement, to me. How, then, shall I comprehend himself? How shall I understand his nature; or account for his actions? In *these*, he plans for a boundless scheme of things; whereas I can see but an inch before me. In *that* he contains what is infinitely more inconceivable, than all the wonders of his creation, put together; and I am plunged in astonishment and blindness, when I attempt to stretch my wretched inch of line along the Immensity of his Nature. Were my body so large, that I could sweep all the fixed stars, visible from this world in a clear night, and grasp them in the hollow of my hand; and were my soul capacious in proportion to so vast a body; I should, notwithstanding, be infinitely too narrow-minded to conceive his wisdom, when he forms a fly: and how then should I think of conceiving of Himself? No; this is the highest of all impossibilities. His very lowest work checks and represses my vain contemplations; and holds them down at an infinite distance from him. When we think of God in this light, we can easily conceive it possible, that there may be a Trinity of Persons in his nature."

II. *It is asserted by Unitarians that the doctrine of the Trinity is Anti-scriptural.*

It has undoubtedly been observed, that in this discourse I have considered objections against the *Deity of Christ*, and *the Trinity*, as being commensurate. The reason is, that, so far as my knowledge extends, those, who deny one of these doctrines, deny also the other. Although it is not strictly true, therefore, that every objection against the Trinity must of course be an objection against the Deity of Christ; yet, as this is the ultimate aim of almost all such objections, actually made; I have not thought any distinction concerning them necessary in this discourse.

As this objection is designed to be extensive, and is capable of being indefinitely diversified; it will not be possible for me to take notice of all the forms, in which it may appear. It will be my intention, however, to dwell upon those particular applications of it, on which the authors of the objection seem to have laid the greatest stress.

The general import of this objection, is, that *Christ is exhibited*

*in the Scriptures, as inferior to the Father.* All the alleged exhibitions of this nature, may be advantageously ranged under two heads.

*Those made by himself;* and,

*Those made by the Prophets and Apostles.*

An answer to the principal of these will, it is believed, be an answer to the rest.

1st. *Christ*, as the *Unitarians* assert, *exhibits himself as inferior to the Father, and therefore declares in unequivocal language, that He is not truly God.*

Particularly, 1st. *He declares, that he is not Omnipotent.*

John v. 19, *Then Jesus answered, and said unto them, Verily, Verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself.* And again, in the 30th verse, *I can of mine own-self do nothing.* And again, John viii. 28, *Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know, that I am He, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.*

It will not I presume, be pretended, that these words, in either of the passages, are used in the strict and absolute sense. That Christ would *literally do nothing of himself* will not be asserted, in the sense, *that he had no power at all*, and could not act to any purpose whatever. Whoever Christ was, he doubtless possessed some degree of inherent power, or power which was his own; and by it could do, at least some such things, as are done by men generally. What, then, is intended? Undoubtedly, either, that *Christ could do nothing compared with what the Father can do;* or *that Christ could do nothing, except what was directed by the Father, according to the Commission, given to him by the Father, to act in the Mediatorial character.*

That the latter is the true interpretation is, in my view, unanswerably evident from the following considerations:

1. *The subject of a comparison between the power of Christ and that of the Father, is not even alluded to in any preceding part of the Chapter, either by himself, or by the Jews.*

The only debate between Christ and the Jews, was *concerning the rectitude*, or *lawfulness, of his conduct.* As the Jews were about to kill him for having acted unlawfully, both *in healing a man on the Sabbath-day, and in saying, that God was his Father;* it is incredible, (because it is imputing to him a gross absurdity) that Christ should here, instead of replying to the accusation of the *Jews*, and justifying his conduct as lawful, enter on a comparison between his ability, and that of the Father. This would have been a total desertion of the important subject in controversy; and could not have been of the least use, either for the purpose of justifying himself, or of repressing the violence of the *Jews.* On the contrary, it would have been the assumption of a subject totally foreign; totally unconnected with the case in hand; without

any thing to lead to it; incapable of being understood by those, to whom it was addressed, and a species of conduct which, so far as I can see, would have been irreconcileable with common sense.

2dly. *This interpretation is refuted, so far as the objection is concerned, by the discourse, of which it is a part.*

The whole drift of this discourse is to show the extent of that *authority*, which Christ possessed, as the Mediator. In displaying this authority, He also displays, necessarily, the *power* which he possesses. In Chapter v. 19, from which the first of the objected declarations is taken, is this remarkable assertion: *What things soever He*, that is, the Father, *doeth; these, also, doeth the Son likewise.* It is presumed, that not even a Unitarian will imagine, that in a verse, in which this declaration is contained, Christ could intend, by any phraseology whatever, to exhibit a limitation of his own power.

With this complete refutation of the meaning, now in question, in our hands, it can scarce be necessary to observe, that, in many subsequent parts of this discourse of Christ, it is also overthrown in the same complete manner.

This interpretation being thus shown to be false; the other, the only remaining one, might be fairly assumed as the true interpretation. At the same time, it may be easily evinced to be the true one, by other considerations.

1st. *It is perfectly applicable to the case specified.*

That the proposition, containing it, expresses what is true, viz. that Christ, as the Mediator, could do nothing of himself; that is, that while acting under a commission from his Father, he could do nothing of his own authority, but must do all things by the authority, and agreeably to the commission, which he had received; will, I suppose, be admitted by every man. But this proposition is not more clearly true, than it is applicable to the case in hand. If Christ in those things, of which he was accused by the Jews, acted by the authority, and agreeably to the commission, which he had received from the Father; then, plainly, that which he did was right. Of course the objections, and the animosities of the *Jews*, were without cause, and wholly reprehensible. In this sense, the answer of Christ was perfectly pertinent, and the only valid answer, which could be given.

2dly. *That this is the true meaning is evident from John* viii. 28, (the last of the passages quoted above.) *Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of myself; but, as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.* In this passage Christ informs the *Jews*, that, after they had lifted him up, on the cross, they should know, that he was the MESSIAH; and that he did nothing of himself: not that he did nothing by his own power: but nothing by his own authority. The former having nothing to do with the subject: the latter being perfectly applicable to it.

Therefore he adds, *As my Father hath taught me*, or, as we say in modern English, According to the Instructions which I have received from my Father, *I speak these things*. It will hardly be questioned, that Christ here speaks of his authority only, and not at all of his power.

3dly. *We find the same language, used in the same manner, in various other passages of Scripture.* In Gen. xix. 22, Christ himself, acting in the same Mediatorial character, says to *Lot*, beseeching him to permit himself and his family to escape to *Zoar; Haste thee; escape thither; for I cannot do any thing, till thou be come thither.* It will not be pretended, that so far as his power only was concerned, Christ could not as easily have begun the work of destroying the cities of the plain, before *Lot* had escaped, as afterward. But as it was a part of the divine determination to preserve *Lot* and his family; so the authority of Christ did not in this case extend to any thing, nor permit him to do any thing, which involved the destruction of *Lot.*

*Numbers* xxii. 18, *Balaam* says, *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.* This declaration of *Balaam*, I consider as expressing fully and completely the very thing, which, in the objected passages, Christ expressed elliptically. And again chapter xxiv. 12, 13, *And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers, which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad, of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak?*

I shall only add to these observations the obvious one; that persons, acting under a commission, now use similar language, in similar circumstances.

Should any one question, whether Christ acted under a commission; He himself has answered the question in his intercessory prayers, John xvii. 4: *I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do.*

From these observations, it is, if I am not deceived, clear, that the declarations of Christ, here objected to, do not in any sense refer to his power; but only to his authority as Mediator; and are therefore utterly irrelevant to the purpose, for which they are alleged.

2dly. *The Unitarians object, that Christ exhibits himself, as inferior to the Father in knowledge.*

The passage quoted to prove this assertion is, especially, Mark xiii. 32: *But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

Here, it is said, Christ confesses himself to be ignorant of the day and hour specified.

On this objection I observe,

1st. *That the subject, of which Christ is here declared to be igno-*

*rant, is a subject, which demanded no greater extent of knowledge; or rather, which demanded knowledge in a less extent, than many subjects, disclosed by him, in the same prophecy.* The subject is the time of the destruction of *Jerusalem.* In this very prophecy, as well as in various others, he had uttered many things, which appear to demand as great a measure of prescience, as this can be supposed to have done. Such were the arising of false Prophets; the preaching of the Gospel through the world; the earthquakes, famines, and pestilences; the fearful sights, and great signs, which should precede the destruction of *Jerusalem;* the hatred and treachery of parents and others to his Disciples, and the protraction of the ruinous state of *Jerusalem* until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. The foreknowledge of the particular period of its destruction was, certainly, no very material addition to the foreknowledge of these things; and would imply no very material enlargement of the mind, by which they were foreknown. Several of the Prophets, it is to be remembered, were furnished with a foreknowledge of dates, not differing from this in their importance: thus Isaiah foreknew the date of the destruction of Ephraim; Jeremiah, that of the Babylonish captivity; and Daniel, that of the Death of Christ; and no reason can be imagined why the foreknowledge of this particular date should be withholden from Christ, even, if we admit, that He was a mere man; when so many other things, relating to the same event, of so much more importance, were revealed to him.

There is, therefore, no small reason to believe, that the Greek word, οιδε, has here the signification of γνωριζω, according to the comment of Dr. *Macknight;* and denotes, not *to know;* but, *to cause to know;* a signification, which it sometimes has, as he has sufficiently shown: particularly in 1 Cor. ii. 2, *For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified:* that is, *I determined* TO MAKE KNOWN *nothing among you,* &c. If this sense of the word be admitted, the meaning of the passage will be, *of that day no one causeth men to know, but the Father:* that is, when, in his providence, He shall bring the event to pass. In other words; the time of the destruction of *Jerusalem,* shall not be disclosed by prophecy; but shall be made known only by the providence of God, bringing it to pass. I need not say that was literally the fact.

2dly. *Christ himself informs us, that no one knows the Son but the Father, and that no one knows the Father, but the Son, and he, to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him.**

In this declaration Christ asserts, that he possesses an exclusive knowledge of the Father, in which no being whatever shares with him: a knowledge, totally distinct from that, which is acquired by revelation; and therefore immediate, and underived.

* Matthew xi. 27.

He also declares, John v. 20, that *the Father sheweth Him all things, that Himself doeth; that He searcheth the reins and the heart*, Rev. ii. 23; *and that He is with his disciples alway, to the end of the world, and, therefore, omnipresent*, Matthew xxviii. 20. *Peter* also says to him, John xxi. 17, *Lord, thou knowest all things:* an ascription, which, if not true, Christ could not have received without the grossest impiety; and which he yet did receive, because he did not reject, nor reprove, it.

But He, of whom these things are said, certainly foreknew the time of the destruction of *Jerusalem*. If, then, the objected text denotes, that *Christ did not know that time*, the declaration cannot be true, except by being made concerning Christ considered in a totally different character, and sense, from those, in which the same book teaches us that *He knows the Father*, and *knows all things*. It is, therefore, not a shift, nor fetch, nor evasion, in the *Trinitarians*, to assert, that this passage, if thus understood, is spoken of Christ *in his human nature only*, and not in the nature exhibited in the passages, with which it has been compared. On the contrary, it is a deduction from the Scriptures, irresistibly flowing from what they say; and the only means, by which they can be either consistent, or true.

3dly. *It is objected by the Unitarians, that Christ has denied himself to be originally and supremely Good.*

The passage, chosen to support this objection, is the answer of Christ to the Young Ruler, Matt. xix. 17, *Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One: that is God.* Here Christ is supposed to disclaim original and supreme goodness, as belonging to himself; and to distinguish between his own goodness and that of God.

What the real reason was, for which Christ gave this answer, I shall not here examine. If Christ is not God; then he certainly would disclaim, and ought to disclaim, this character. If he is; then this assertion does not at all declare, that he is not possessed of this goodness. The decision of this question will, therefore, determine the true application of this answer.

It has heretofore been proved in these discourses, that Christ was the person, who proclaimed on *Mount Sinai* his own Name to *Moses*. This Name he declared to be, *the* LORD, *the* LORD *God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth*. It will not be contested, that the Person, who made this proclamation, was good in the original or absolute sense. Until this Person is proved not to have been Christ, the objection, founded on this text, is a mere begging of the question.

But it is further to be remembered, that Christ was also a man. According to the doctrine of the *Trinitarians*, therefore, as entirely as to that of their opposers, Christ used this declaration, in the very sense in which they allege it, with the most perfect propriety.

4thly. *Christ*, as the *Unitarians* allege, *exhibits his inferiority to the Father by praying to him.*

How, if it be admitted, as *Trinitarians* universally admit, that he was a man, could he with propriety do otherwise? He was placed under the same law, and required, generally, to perform the same duties demanded of other men.

5thly. *Christ declares himself to be inferior to the Father, in express terms: My Father is greater than I;* and *my Father is greater than all.*

These declarations are perfectly consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity, in two ways. First, *as Christ was a man;* secondly, *as in the character of Mediator he acted under a commission from the Father.* He, who acts under a commission from another, is, while thus acting, inferior to him, from whom he received the commission.

*But it is further objected, that Christ is exhibited as inferior to the Father by the Prophets and Apostles.*

It will be unnecessary, under this head, to mention more than a single instance. I shall select that instance, which seems to be the favourite one among *Unitarians.* It is contained in the following words, taken from the 24th and 28th verses of 1 Cor. xv: *Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom, to God, even the Father:* and *When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

To comprehend the Apostle's meaning in these declarations, it is necessary to remember, that Christ, as sustaining the office of Mediator, received from the Father *a kingdom*, according to the Scriptures; and that when his Mediatorial office ceases, because the purposes of it are accomplished, *that* kingdom, as we should naturally expect, is exhibited in the Scriptures as ceasing also; there being no end, for which it should be any longer retained. Christ will, therefore, deliver it up to the Father, when, at the Consummation of all things, He *presents* to Him *the Church, as a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;* and makes his final, triumphant entry into the Heavens.

Concerning the latter article, here objected; *That the Son shall then be subject to the Father*, it can scarcely be proper, that I should attempt to determine the exact import. It is perfectly evident, however, that this must be true of the human nature of Christ. It is also evident, that the act of rendering up the Kingdom which he had received, is an act of subjection to the Father; nor does the passage demand any other interpretation.

That these declarations do not intend what the objectors allege, we certainly know. *For unto the Son* the Father *saith*, (Heb. i. 8) *Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever. His dominion*, (says Daniel) *is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that, which shall not be destroyed. He shall reign*

(said *Gabriel* to *Mary*) *over the house of Jacob, for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. The throne of God and the Lamb* is, as we are informed by *St. John*, the throne of eternal dominion in the Heavens; out of which, *proceeds the river of the water of life*, or the endless felicity and glory of all the happy inhabitants. To God and the Lamb also are equally addressed, those sublime ascriptions of praise, which constitute the peculiar and everlasting worship of saints and angels. In this superior sense, therefore, the kingdom of Christ will literally endure for ever.

It ought here to be added, that the same Apostle, who here says, that the Father put all things under Christ, informs us in the same paragraph, that *Christ himself put all things under his feet:* and, elsewhere, that *Christ is able to subdue all things unto himself, and that he is head over all things.* Phil. Eph. i. How plain is it, that *He, who is able to subdue all things unto Himself*, is able to do any thing! that *He, who puts all things under his own feet*, does it by his own agency; and that *He who is* now *head over all things*, is of course qualified to be *head over all things* for ever!

# SERMON XL.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF UNITARIANS.

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 20.—*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*

IN the preceding discourse from these words, after observing, that *the reasonings of mankind*, when employed in devising and establishing a scheme of Theology, or attempting to amend that, which is taught by God, *are vain;* I mentioned, that in my own view, the *Arians* and *Socinians*, were fairly included within this declaration of Scripture. For this assertion I considered myself bound to give my reasons, and proposed to do it under two heads:

I. *Answers, to their Objections against the doctrine of the Trinity;* and,

II. *Objections to the Doctrines, which they hold concerning Christ; and their Conduct in the management of the controversy.* The former of these was the subject of the preceding discourse; the first part of the latter shall furnish the materials of the present.

To the Doctrines of the Unitarians, I make the following objections:

1st. *The Arians hold, that Christ is a super-angelic being, so much greater than all other creatures, as to be styled a God; and to perform the various divine offices, ascribed to him in the Scriptures by delegated power and authority.*

To my own mind, this doctrine is utterly inconsistent both with the Scriptures and Reason.

The only argument, which, so far as I know, is derived directly from the Scriptures to support this opinion, is, *that Angels are sometimes called Aleim, and that Magistrates have once this name given to them.* That neither of these facts will warrant the doctrine in question will, I trust, be evident from the following reasons.

1st. *Angels and Magistrates are called by this name only in the aggregate, gods; no Angel, or Magistrate, being ever called God.* It is well known to my audience, that the same name is also given to the Idols of the Heathen; to animals, vegetables, the souls of departed men, or demons; and to all the other objects of Heathen worship. The term, *Gods*, is here evidently used in a figurative sense; natural and obvious, because the beings, to whom it is applied, sustained, or were supposed to sustain, some attribute, or character, resembling those, which belong to the true God. Thus God says to *Moses*, (Exodus vii. 1) *See; I have made thee a God to Pharaoh:* that is, "I have given thee authority over him, and armed

thee with power to control, and punish him." In the same manner Magistrates are called Lords, and Kings, because they rule with subordinate power and authority.

But the term, God, in the absolute, is never given to any created being, unless Christ can be proved to be a creature: a thing which, it is apprehended, cannot be done. To Him, however, it is applied, in many instances, without any qualification; or any notice whatever, that it is not applied in the highest sense. At the same time, it is, when applied to him, connected with other objects, attributable only to the Deity. Thus in Romans ix. 5, when *Christ* is said by the Apostle to *be God*, He is also said to be *over all things*, and *blessed for ever*. Thus, when St. John informs us, that *the Word was God*, he informs us, also, that the *Word was in the beginning*, or eternal; *was in the beginning with God*, or co-eternal with God; and that *all things were made by him*, or that he was the Creator of all things. The attribution, therefore, of these things to Christ, when he is called God, (viz.) that he exists from eternity; is co-eternal with God, or the Father; and is the Creator and Ruler of all things; marks in the most definite, as well as decisive, manner, the meaning of the word *God*, when applied to him; and proves that it is applied in the highest sense. Nothing, parallel to this, or distantly resembling it, is found in any application of this term, to any other being, except God.

2dly. *Christ is called by all the other Names of God, except one;* (viz.) *the Father.*

It has been shown in a former discourse, that Christ is called *the true God*, *the great God*, *the mighty God*, JEHOVAH, &c. The application of these names to Christ is clear evidence, that, when he is called God, this application is given to him, in the same sense in which it is given to the Father; to whom, and the Holy Spirit, exclusively, these other names are also given.

3dly. *The Attributes and Actions, universally, of God, are ascribed to Christ.* It is plain then, that the Scriptures, which give this name to Christ, connect with it all the other appellations, together with all the Attributes and Actions, which make up the Scriptural character of God.

In all these respects, the application of the term *Gods* to Angels and Magistrates differs totally, and I apprehend infinitely, from that of GOD to Christ. The application of the term Gods to Angels and Magistrates, therefore, furnishes not the least reason to believe, that Christ is called God in the sense alleged, or that Christ is a delegated God.

Having removed the only Scriptural argument, on which I suppose any serious reliance to be placed, as a proof, that Christ is a delegated God; I proceed to observe, that this scheme is utterly inconsistent, with the things which are said of him in the Scriptures. It is utterly inconsistent with the ascription to him of the Names, Attributes, and Actions, which have been just now mentioned.

Particularly it is inconsistent with the declarations, that *He made all things, and that He upholds all things, by the word of His power.* In the account, given us by *St. John* and *St. Paul* of the Creation of all things by Christ, both Apostles use phraseology, which, with an exactness scarcely paralleled, denotes an absolute universality. *By him*, says *St. Paul*, *were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. All things*, says *St. John*, *were made by him; and without him was not one thing made, which hath been made.* If these two passages do not denote an absolute universality; language cannot express it. Every possible, as well as actual, thing, is either visible or invisible. Every actual thing, which is either visible or invisible, it is here expressly said, Christ created. *Without him*, it is expressly said, *was not one thing made, which hath been made.* Unless therefore something has been created, that is neither *visible nor invisible;* unless there is something existing in the creation, *which has not been made;* there is nothing, which was not created by Christ.

The interpretation of these passages by the *Unitarians*, which makes them mean no more, than, *that Christ published the Gospel and constituted the Church*, is a violation of common sense, and common decency. Let us try the same mode of construction with another passage, to which it must be acknowledged to be equally applicable. In the passage, quoted from *St. Paul*, it is said, that *Christ created all things, that are in heaven, and that are in earth.* This the *Unitarians* say, means no more, than that *Christ published the Gospel, and constituted the Church.* In the first verse in Genesis, it is said, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* This, I say, and, upon their plan of construction, am certainly warranted to say it; means no more than, that *in the beginning God published the Gospel and constituted the Church.* Ought not any man to be deeply ashamed of the prejudice, and strongly to censure the confidence, which has led him to use such licentious freedom with language in any case; especially with *words, which were taught, not by man's wisdom, but by the Holy Ghost?*

Dr. *Price* and other *Arians* attempt to evade the force of these and the like passages, by introducing *a distinction between formation and creation.* In this, however, they must be acknowledged to be unhappy. The words, used by *St. John*, are εγενετο, and γεγονεν; the proper English of which is *existed.* Γινομαι, of which they are derivatives, signifies also *to be born, to spring up, to be brought into being, and to be caused to exist.* No word, therefore, more comprehensive or more appropriate to the object in view, can be found either in the *Greek*, or, so far as I can see, in any other, language. The word used by St. Paul is εκτισθη; from κτιζω; the appropriate meaning of which, as you well know, is *to create.* As, therefore, the act of creating all things in the most absolute sense

is, in the most express and unequivocal language, ascribed to Christ by these Apostles; by what authority or with what decency, can it be denied by any man?

The *work of creating all things Christ performed by his command.* All things, also, he *upholds by the same word of his power.* If these acts, and this manner of performing them, are not proofs of infinite power; such proofs have never existed. It is to be remarked, that the Apostle asserts directly, that Christ *upholds all things by the word of his own power*, τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυναμεως αυτοῦ. This act, therefore, is not performed by delegated power; and neither of these acts could possibly be performed by any being, except One, whose power is without limitation.

Among the numerous other things, ascribed to Christ, which are utterly inconsistent with the supposition of his being a delegated GOD, I shall mention only *two:* as the mention of more would demand a longer time, than can now be devoted to this part of the subject. The *first* is, that *Divine worship was rendered to him by inspired persons on earth, and is also rendered to him in heaven.* This, it is presumed, has been proved beyond controversy. *Stephen* prayed to him. Paul prayed to him: and the whole Christian Church was, at its commencement, distinguished by the appellation of *those, who invoked the name of Christ in prayer.* The anthems of praise in the heavens, sung by Saints and Angels, ascribe to him, both separately, and jointly with the Father, that peculiar glory and honour, which is expressive of the highest worship of the heavenly inhabitants. But Christ himself says, quoting Deut. vi. 13, and x. 20, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy* GOD *and him only shalt thou serve.* No *creature*, therefore, can be lawfully worshipped; but Christ is lawfully worshipped; for he is worshipped by Apostles, Angels, and glorified Saints.

*The second and last thing* of this nature is, *that Christ is immutable. Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* If Christ were only the exalted creature, the super-angelic being, the delegated God, whom the *Arians* declare him to be, he would of all virtuous beings be the most changeable; because, with his superior faculties and advantages, he would advance more rapidly in knowledge, and virtue, and in power also; for the increase of knowledge is in itself the increase of power. Such a being cannot possibly, therefore, be *the Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* At the same time it is further to be remarked, that a wonderful instance of change is asserted of Christ, if he be this Super-angelic being, in the Scriptures themselves. *St. Luke* declares, that when he was twelve years old, *he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with* GOD *and man.* According to the *Arians*, this Super-angelic being, the greatest of all created minds, brought into existence antecedently to every other creature, was united to the body of an infant, and born of the virgin *Mary*, and thus constituted the Person, named Jesus Christ in

the Scriptures. This infant differed so little from other infants, as to intelligence, that the first time he was regarded as extraordinary, appears plainly to have been the time when he conversed with the *Jewish* Doctors in the temple; as recorded in the second chapter of *St. Luke*. At this time he was observed to increase in wisdom, so as to increase in favour with mankind. He also actually increased in wisdom, and actually increased in favour with God. He therefore changed, not only really, but obviously. If, then, we admit, that Christ was this Super-angelic being; we must also admit, that he was not the Christ, who was *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. But we cannot admit Christ to be this being. From infancy to twelve years of age he had unceasingly changed also. What, then, was his mind, when he was born; or when he had arrived at one, or two years of age? Doubtless, as much inferior to what it was at twelve years of age, as other infants are to what they become at the same period. But how evident is it, that such an infantine mind could not be a Super-angelic mind. The change, it is to be remembered, is declared by the Evangelist to be real, and not merely apparent. And it is presumed no Arian will admit that his infantine character was merely assumed and hypocritical. Arians will undoubtedly agree, that he was then equally sincere, as ever afterwards. But a Super-angelic mind must have lost all its peculiar powers and characteristics, to have become such a mind, as that of Christ in his infancy, or his childhood. Such a mind, originally formed with these sublime faculties, existing in a singular proximity to Jehovah, and expanded, and exalted, by its peculiar advantages for improving in knowledge and virtue, throughout four thousand years, must have risen to so transcendent a height of intellectual and moral attainments, as, if it were not entirely changed in its whole character, must have excited the attention, the amazement, and probably if it had not forbidden it, the worship of every spectator. At the same time, such powers and attainments must have been so utterly incomprehensible by mankind, that, however rapidly they had increased, the change could never have been perceptible by such eyes as theirs. It is therefore certain, that, if the Christ, born at *Bethlehem*, was this Super-angelic being, he ceased to be Super-angelic, when united to the body of an infant; and differed in no other respect from the minds of other infants, except that he was perfectly holy, and possessed a superior susceptibility of wisdom. In other words, he was changed into a human being; perfect indeed, as such; but still a human being; and shorn, wholly, of his Super-angelic greatness. If *Arians* will put these things together, it is believed, that themselves will acknowledge *mysteries*, of an inexplicable kind, to be contained in this part of their System.

Nor is this idea of a delegated God a whit more consistent with Reason. Nothing is more repugnant to reason, than that a finite being should have made the Universe; should uphold it: should

possess it; should govern it; should judge and reward its Intelligent inhabitants; should forgive their sins; should be the source of life; should communicate endless life; and should be the ultimate end, for which they and all things else were created. Every one of these things is not only utterly aside from the dictates of Reason, on this subject; a mystery utterly inexplicable; but is directly repugnant to common sense. Nothing is more strongly realized by Reason, than that *He, who built all things, is* very GOD; that *He*, who made the universe, can alone uphold, possess, or govern it; or be the ultimate end, for which it was created; or do all, or any, of the things, just now recited. If this being be not GOD in the absolute sense, Reason has no knowledge, and no evidence, that there is a GOD.

Accordingly, *Dr. Priestly* has, if I mistake not, observed, and justly, that no doctrine is more preposterous, than the doctrine that Christ created the world, and that yet he is not God. Still, the Scriptures assert in terms, as comprehensive, as precise, as appropriate, and as unambiguous, as human language can furnish, that Christ *created every* individual *thing, that hath been made.* Yet in spite of this language, chosen by God himself, to express his views on the subject, Dr. *Priestly* asserts, that Christ is not God. The manner, in which he satisfies himself concerning this declaration, will be examined hereafter.

II. If these things are preposterously, and irreconcileably, asserted concerning a Super-angelic being—a delegated god; *what shall we say concerning their compatibility with the Socinian doctrine, that Christ is a mere man?* If the fact had not already taken place; would it not be absolutely incredible, that any sober man living should believe such assertions, as these? Let me, however, before I make them, instead of the name of a man, substitute that of *Gabriel:* a being, in holiness, wisdom, and power, originally superior to any man; and in a still higher degree superior by the improvements, made in them all through the four thousand years which preceded the work of Redemption. This I do, that the repetition of the name of a man may not shock the ears of my audience, while I am making a simple, and perfectly equitable statement, in that very form, in which it must be made by every conscientious man, before he can feel himself warranted to receive it. * *In the beginning was Gabriel; and Gabriel was with God; and Gabriel was God. The same was in the beginning with God. By him were all things made; and without him, was not one thing made, which hath been made. And Gabriel became flesh; and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory; the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace* and truth. † *For by Gabriel were all things created, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth; visible and invisible. All things were created by him, and for him. And by him*

* John i. 1—3, 14. † Col. i. 16, 17.

*all things consist;* * *and he is head over all things unto his church.* † *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Gabriel came, who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Gabriel;* ‡ *Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And, being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name: that at the name of Gabriel every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* § *Hearken unto me, O Jacob my servant; and Israel whom I have called. I am he: I am the first; and I am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth; and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: I call unto them; they stand up together. Come ye near unto me; hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From the time that it was, there I am. And now the Lord Jehovah and his Spirit hath sent me,* ‖ *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by Gabriel: who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.* ¶ *The throne of God and Gabriel,* ** *and Gabriel hath on his Vesture, and on his thigh, a name written King of kings, and Lord of lords.* †† *Every creature which is in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto Gabriel, for ever and ever.*

Is there a person present, who is not shocked with these declarations? Would not the insertion of them in the sacred Canon, stumble, irrecoverably, every sober man, who now believes it to be the Word of God? Is it possible for the mind to ascribe the things, declared in them, to any being, less than infinite? Is not this favoured Angel infinitely too humble in his nature, and station, to claim, or receive them? Who could bring himself to pray to *Gabriel* for the forgiveness of his enemies; for the acceptance of his Soul, when expiring;‡‡ or for the removal of his distresses; or for any thing? Who could be baptized in his Name;§§ or receive a blessing from him united with the Father and the Holy Ghost?‖‖ But, if these things are monstrous, when applied to *Gabriel*, one of the highest created Intelligences; how must they appear, when applied to *a man*, one of the lowest? How would they appear, for example, were we to substitute the name of *Moses*, or the name of *Paul*, for that of *Gabriel?* Is it not plain, that the incongruity

* Eph. i. 22.
§ Isaiah xlviii. 12, 13, 16.
** Rev. xix. 16.
§§ Matt. xxviii. 19.
† Rom. ix. 5.
‖ Heb. i. 1, 3.
†† Rev. v. 13.
‖‖ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
‡ Phil. ii. 6
¶ Rev. xxii. 1, 3.
‡‡ Acts vii. 59, 60.

would be so excessive, as to appear to have been written, not in serious earnest, but in blasphemous sport; with a direct design to entail impiety and contempt upon the Book, in which they were found? and would they not, instead of being read with sobriety and reverence, fill a light mind with ludicrous emotions, and a serious mind with horror? Yet such, so far as I can see, is substantially the very alteration, which must be made, according to the *Socinian* doctrine, concerning Christ. It is true, that *Socinians* regard Christ as a wiser and better man than *Moses*, or *Paul;* but in no other respect do they suppose him to differ from either.

III. *I object to the doctrine of the Unitarians, that it has compelled them to renounce, successively, many other important doctrines of the Gospel beside that of the Trinity.*

The Deity of Christ must be acknowledged by all men, if it be real, to affect, materially, every thing which is said of him in the Scriptures. The difference between his character, according to this scheme, and according to the scheme which makes him a creature, is infinite. Every thing, therefore, which is recorded of him, and consequently every view which is formed of him, must be exceedingly diverse, in the mind of a *Trinitarian* and the mind of an *Unitarian*. In the view of a *Trinitarian*, He is JEHOVAH, the Alpha and Omega, the first Cause and the last End of all things. In that of an *Arian*, He is a being infinitely different; a creature somewhat higher than the Angels, brought into being somewhat before them: and in that of a *Socinian* still different from this: a man, born about eighteen hundred years since in *Judea;* somewhat better than *Moses*, *Isaiah*, or *Paul*. Now nothing is more evident, than that every thing, belonging to the first of these beings; his existence, actions, and attributes; together with the relations which he sustains to creatures; must be infinitely different from those, which belong to either of the others. Those, who adopt one of these opinions, naturally, and necessarily, fall into very different systems of thought concerning Christ: concerning the station, which he holds in the universe, and the part, which he acts in the work of Redemption; and concerning many highly important doctrines of the Christian faith. Accordingly, the whole scheme of Christianity, adopted by *Trinitarians*, is widely different from those adopted by *Arians* and *Socinians*. That this is true is well known to all, who are conversant with the schemes of doctrine, embraced, severally, by these classes of men; and is abundantly confessed, and boasted, by the *Unitarians* themselves. Some very important doctrines, constituting, and illustrating, this difference, I shall now mention. If the doctrines of the *Trinitarians* are really contained in the Scriptures; if they are clearly and abundantly declared; and if they are accordant only with the divinity of Christ; then it will follow, by unavoidable consequence, that the *Unitarians* have been compelled to renounce them, in consequence of having renounced the divinity of Christ.

If, at the same time, the doctrines, thus renounced, are of high importance to the Christian system; and those, which distinguish it from all philosophical systems of Theology; then it will appear, that the renunciation of these doctrines is an error of dangerous influence, and deeply to be regretted; and, as it grows necessarily out of the renunciation of the divinity of Christ, that that is an error also, of the same unhappy nature.

The 1st *of these doctrines, which I shall mention, is the doctrine of human Depravity.*

This doctrine, it is believed, has been fully evinced, in these discourses, to be a doctrine of the Scriptures. If it has not; it must have arisen either from the weakness, or the inattention, of the Preacher; for no truth is more clearly declared in any book, than this doctrine in the Scriptures; and none is more amply supported by the evidence of fact. In the Scriptures we are taught, in the most unequivocal language, that *all men have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* that *all are concluded under sin;* that *all are by nature children of wrath; being children of disobedience;* that *all are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin.* These declarations, to which the whole history of man gives the fullest attestation; and to which there is not even one solitary contradiction in fact; certainly stand with the Unitarians for nothing, or for nothing like what the words themselves customarily mean. In their view, we are *not* by nature children of wrath, as *not* being children of disobedience; we are *not* shapen in iniquity, *nor* conceived in sin; we are *not* concluded, or shut up, together, under sin; and every imagination of our hearts, as they believe, is *not* evil from our youth.

2dly. *The impossibility of Justification by our own Righteousness is another of these doctrines.*

*To justify* is *to declare a being, placed under a law, to be just, or righteous*, or, in other words, *to have done that, which the law required.* Mankind are placed, as subjects, under the law of God. They have not done what the law required; and therefore cannot, with truth, be declared to have done it; or, in other words, they cannot be justified. Accordingly, *St. Paul*, after having proved at length that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, are sinners, says, *Therefore by deeds of law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.* And, again, *If there had been a law, which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have come by law; but, if righteousness come by law, then Christ died in vain.* But the *Unitarians*, in a vast multitude of instances, (for it is not true of them all) utterly deny this doctrine; and hold, that we are justified by our own repentance and obedience; both of which, they teach, are accepted for their own sake. GOD, therefore, is exhibited by them, as justifying us, in direct opposition to the express language of his law: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. He that doeth these things shall live by them; but the Soul, that sinneth, shall die.* In direct contradiction

to these declarations of GOD himself, they hold, that the soul which sinneth shall *not* die; and that *he* is *not* cursed who does not continue in all things, written in the law, to do them: while he who doeth *not* these things shall yet, according to their scheme, live. Thus, although GOD has declared, *That heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one jot, or tittle, of the law shall fail;* their doctrine teaches us, that the whole law, so far as its penalty is concerned, shall fail, with respect to every person who repents. Not even an entire, unmingled repentance is demanded; nor a pure, uncontaminated future obedience. Both are professedly left imperfect. All the former sins are imperfectly repented of; and all the future obedience is mixed with sin. On the ground of this repentance, and this obedience, GOD is expected to justify man, still placed under a legal dispensation.

3dly. *Another Doctrine of the same nature is the doctrine of Christ's Atonement.*

The *Unitarians*, to whom I referred under the last head, as not holding the doctrines opposed to it, are those who admit the Doctrine of Christ's Atonement. This I suppose to be true of some of the *Socinians*, and some of the *Arians*. Some of the Socinians hold, that *the fulness of the Godhead dwells*, and will through eternity dwell, *in Christ*, *bodily*. What is supposed by them to be the proper import of this declaration, I know not that they have explained; and therefore may probably be unable to divine. So far as I can conjecture their intention, I should believe, with Dr. *Price*, that they really make Christ GOD; and therefore may not unnaturally suppose, that he accomplished an expiation for the sins of men. If this conjecture be just, they harmonize substantially with *Praxeas*, because, as they deny a distinction of persons in the Godhead, they must suppose the Father, by a mysterious union, to have dwelt in the man Christ Jesus; and, thus influencing and directing all his conduct, to have accomplished, through him, an atonement to himself: a Doctrine on account of which *Praxeas* and his followers were called *Patripassians;* as believing, that the Father himself suffered. Some of the *Arians*, also, have acknowledged, that Christ made an atonement for the sins of men. In what manner this was done, or can be done, by a creature, a subject of law and government, all whose obedience is due to the utmost extent of his powers, and circumstances, and through every moment of his existence, for himself; for his own justification; I know not, that they have attempted to explain. I rather suppose, that, though professed enemies to mystery, they choose to leave this, as a mystery which allows of no investigation. How an Atonement can be made by such a being, and how it can be accepted by GOD, in accordance with the Doctrines taught in the Scriptures, I confess myself unable to discern. Still it is but just to observe, that an Atonement is believed by a number of both *Socinians* and *Arians* to have been made by Christ. Dr. *Priestly*, and most, if not all

the modern Socinians, and many of the *Arians*, though I am not able to say how many, utterly deny, so far as my knowledge extends, any Atonement at all; and thus take away from the Christian system what the great body of the Church has in every age esteemed the Capital Doctrine in the scheme of Redemption, and from mankind every rational hope of escape from future punishment. The only encouraging declaration to sinners, exclusive of those which are founded on it, which I can find in the Gospel, is this: that *Christ has redeemed us from under the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us.* Accordingly, this declaration, repeated in very numerous forms, is every where insisted on in the Gospel, as the commanding theme, and as the only consolation to apostate men. If the doctrine, contained in this declaration, be taken out of the Gospel; mankind are left wholly under the dominion of Law; and must necessarily suffer its penalty.

In my own view, Dr. *Priestly*, and those who accord with him in denying an atonement, are more consistent with themselves, or with the other parts of their system, than the rest of the *Unitarians*. He, who denies the Deity of Christ, appears to me to cut off the possibility of any vicarious interference in the behalf of sinners. At the same time, the atonement of Christ is so plainly, so frequently, and so unequivocally, asserted in the Scriptures; and the whole system of divine dispensations is made to depend upon it so extensively, and essentially; that to deny it appears to me to be the same thing, as to deny the Scriptures themselves. So necessary also, and so consolatory, is the doctrine of an atonement for sin to such beings, as we are, as well as so abundantly asserted in the Scriptures, that I can scarcely suppose any man *willingly* to deny it, unless compelled by something entirely different from the Scriptures themselves; and from the nature of the doctrine. One error infers another. The error of denying the Deity of Christ has, I apprehend, compelled those, who have adopted it, to deny, also, all the doctrines, which have been here mentioned; and particularly the atonement, notwithstanding they were opposed in this denial by so many express declarations of the *Sacred Volume*.

4thly. *The Doctrine of Justification by faith in Christ, is also of the same nature.*

As mankind cannot be justified by their own righteousness; it is absolutely necessary, if they are justified at all, that they should be justified by the righteousness of another. Accordingly the Scriptures assert in the most direct, and abundant, manner, that we are *justified by* mere *grace*, or favour, on account of the righteousness of Christ, through that faith in him, in the exercise of which we give up ourselves to him, to be his here and for ever. As this doctrine is not only asserted in very many instances, and in the most express manner, but is also repeatedly proved in form, especially in the Epistles to the *Romans* and the *Gallatians;* it would seem incredible, that it should be denied by any man, who believ-

ed in divine Revelation. Still, it is abundantly denied by Unitarians. Nor do they only deny the doctrine generally, but all the particulars, also, of which it is made up. Beside rejecting the atonement of Christ, and the justification, supposed to be accomplished by means of it, and the influence, which faith is supposed to have in securing such justification to us, they deny, also, the very nature of the Faith, to which this influence is ascribed. The faith of the Gospel is an affection of the heart, being no other than *Trust*, or *Confidence*. *With the heart*, says *St. Paul*, *man believeth unto righteousness*. In direct opposition to this and many other passages of the Scriptures, the Unitarians, generally at least, consider faith as *a mere assent of the understanding to probable evidence:* the same, which is called a speculative, or historical faith. By this opinion they strip faith of the moral nature, every where attributed to it in the Gospel. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*. But surely no exercise of the understanding was ever counted for righteousness to any man; or can possess any moral nature whatever. *Thou believest, that there is one God;* says *St. James; Thou dost well. The Devils, also, believe, and tremble*. Certainly that affection of the mind, of which devils are the subjects, cannot possess moral excellence. *Without faith it is impossible to please God*. But surely the faith, which pleases God, must be essentially different from the faith of devils.

5thly. *Another doctrine, of the same nature, is the Regeneration of the human soul, by the* Spirit *of* God.

That *without holiness*, or moral excellence, *no man shall see the Lord*, is, I think, the irresistible dictate of Reason; as well as the express declaration of the Scriptures: for it cannot be supposed that the infinitely holy God can be pleased with creatures, who are wholly destitute of such excellence; and who, being wholly sinful, have nothing in them, which he can approve, or with which he can be pleased. That *in us, that is, in our flesh*, or original nature, *dwelleth no good thing;* no holiness; no moral excellence; is, as you well know, a declaration contained in the Scriptures. From these two doctrines, thus declared, arises indispensably, the necessity of such a change in our character, as will make us the subjects of holiness. This change is in the Scriptures termed *Regeneration; being born again; being created anew; becoming new creatures; being renewed;* and is expressed by other similar phraseology, and declared to be indispensable to our entrance into the divine kingdom. *Except a man be born again*, said our Saviour to *Nicodemus, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. The production of this change is in the Scriptures ascribed, as his peculiar work, to the Spirit of God. *Except a man*, says our Saviour again, *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God:* that is, except a man have his mind purified by the Spirit of God, as the body is purified by water, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. *Not by works of righteousness which we have*

*done*, says *St. Paul*, *but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Accordingly, those persons, who experience this change of character, are said to be *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;* that is, they derive this change of character not from their parents, nor from their own efforts, nor from the efforts of any man, but from God.

But this change the Unitarians deny, and the agency of the Holy Spirit in effectuating it in the mind of man. Nay. they deny the existence of the Holy Spirit as a person, or agent. As a substitute for regeneration they declare mankind to become better in a gradual manner, by their own will, or efforts, and the efforts, or will, of their fellow-men, to such a degree, that God will accept them. In this manner they make the immense splendour of apparatus for our Redemption and Sanctification; and all the magnificent exhibitions of Christ and the Holy Spirit, terminate in this: that Christ came to declare divine truth to mankind, and to prove it to be divine truth; and that men, assenting to it with the understanding, change themselves by the ordinary efforts of a sinful mind into such a character, as is denoted in the Scriptures by being born again, and created anew. Such, it would seem, was not, however, the opinion of *St. Paul*, when he said, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit;* for they *are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned.*

The present occasion will not permit me particularly to follow this subject any further. It will be sufficient to mention, summarily, several other doctrines, which have been denied by Dr. *Priestly* and his followers.

Our Saviour says, *A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. Dr. Priestly*, on the contrary, informs us, that the human spirit is constituted only of organized Matter: that is, of flesh and bones. *St. Paul* tells us, that, when he is *absent from the body*, he shall be *present with the Lord. Dr. Priestly* holds, that *Paul* was nothing but body; and therefore could not be absent from the body, unless the body could be absent from itself. When the body dies, the soul, according to Dr. *Priestly*, terminates both its operations, and its being, until the resurrection, then to be created again; and therefore is not, and cannot be, present with the Lord, until after that period. The Scriptures assert the existence of Angels, of various orders, both good and evil; and delineate their characters, stations, actions, and enjoyments. Dr. *Priestly* utterly denies, and even ridicules, the doctrine, that evil angels exist; and labours very hard to disprove the existence of good angels. I do not remember, that he expressly denies it; and am not in possession of the volume, in which his opinions on this subject are expressed, but he says all, that is short of such an explicit denial; and plainly indicates, that he does not believe them to exist.

Beyond all this; he denies the plenary inspiration of the Apostles; and declares, that we are to acknowledge them inspired, only when they say they are inspired: and this, he says, we are to do, because the Apostles were honest men; and are to be believed in this, and all their other declarations. Dr. *Priestly* says expressly, that he does not consider the books of Scripture as inspired, but as authentic records of the dispensations of God to mankind; with every particular of which we cannot be too well acquainted. The writers of the books of Scripture, he says, were men, and therefore fallible. But all, that we have to do with them, is in the character of historians, and witnesses, of what they heard and saw; like all other historians, they were liable to mistakes. "Neither I," says he to Dr. *Price*, "nor, I presume, yourself, believe implicitly every thing, which is advanced by any writer in the Old or New Testament. I believe them," that is, the writers, "to have been men, and therefore fallible." And again; "That the books of Scripture were written by particular divine inspiration is a thing, to which the writers themselves make no pretensions. It is a notion destitute of all proof, and that has done great injury to the evidence of Christianity." The reasonings of the divine writers, he declares, we are fully at liberty to judge of, as we are those of other men. Accordingly, he asserts *St. Paul* in a particular instance to have reasoned fallaciously; and maintains that Christ was both fallible and peccable. Other English Socinians unite with Dr. *Priestly* in these sentiments: while Socinians of other nations proceed so far, as to treat the writers themselves, and their books, with marked contempt. In these several things there is plainly an utter denial, that the Scriptures are a Revelation from God. To all these opinions Dr. *Priestly* was once directly opposed: for he was once a *Trinitarian*, and a *Calvinist*. The inference seems, therefore, to be necessary, that he was led to them all by his denial of the Deity of Christ. A similar transformation appears to have been undergone by many other Socinians; and something very like it by no small number of Arians. The observation of Mr. Wilberforce, therefore, seems to be but too well founded, when he says; "In the course, which we lately traced from nominal orthodoxy to absolute Infidelity, Unitarianism is, indeed, a sort of half-way house, if the expression may be pardoned; a stage on the journey, where sometimes a person, indeed, finally stops; but where, not unfrequently, he only pauses for a while; and then pursues his progress."

IV. *The last objection, which I shall make at the present time against the doctrine of the Unitarians, is its Immoral Influence.*

*Mr. Belsham* says, "Rational Christians are often represented as indifferent to practical religion." Dr. *Priestly* says, "A great number of the Unitarians, of the present age, are only men of good sense, and without much practical religion: and there is a greater apparent conformity to the world in them, than is observable in

others." He also says, that he hopes they have more of a real principle of Religion, than they seem to have. He further allows, that Unitarians are peculiarly wanting in zeal for Religion.

At the same time, Dr. *Priestly* acknowledges, that Calvinists have less apparent conformity to the world; and that they seem to have more of a real principle of Religion, than Socinians. He also acknowledges, that those, who, from a principle of religion, ascribe more to God, and less to man, than other persons, are men of the greatest elevation of piety. *Wilberforce* declares it to be an unquestionable fact, that Unitarians are not, in general, distinguished for superior purity of life; and that Unitarianism seems to be resorted to by those, who seek a refuge from the strictness of the practical precepts contained in the Bible.

That these representations are just, I consider as completely proved by Dr. *Fuller* in his letters; and no less completely the immoral tendency of the Socinian system.

It is, also, a well known truth, that Unitarian Churches are in general moderately frequented on the Sabbath; that the sermons of their preachers are generally cold; especially on the peculiar duties of Religion; that they have never formed, nor united with others in forming, Missions for the propagation of the Gospel among the Heathens and Mohammedans; nor distinguished themselves by any discernible earnestness in the cause of practical Christianity. On the contrary, their own declarations, too numerous to be here recited, teach us abundantly, that in the view of a great part of them, almost all the seriousness, fervour, and self-denial, that deep sense of sin, and that prayerful, watchful and strenuous opposition to temptation, which their opponents esteem indispensable to salvation, are mere enthusiasm, superstition, or melancholy. Christianity, with them, seems to be an easy, pleasant kind of Religion; unincumbered by any peculiar restraints; admitting without difficulty of what are usually called the pleasures and amusements of the world; and only confining them within the bounds of delicacy and politeness. Can this, let me ask, be taking up the cross, denying ourselves, and following after Christ?

# SERMON XLI.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—OBJECTIONS TO THE MODE IN WHICH THE UNITARIANS CONDUCT THE CONTROVERSY.

1 Corinthians iii. 20.—*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.*

IN my last discourse I proposed *several Objections against the Doctrine of the Unitarians.* I shall now allege *some Objections against their Conduct in the Management of the controversy.*

Before I proceed to the execution of this design, I shall premise the following general doctrines concerning the Scriptures.

That the Old and New Testament were revealed to the several Writers of them by the Spirit of God.

That, although the several Writers were left to use their own characteristical style, or manner of writing, yet they have always written such *words, as the Holy Ghost taught,* and *not such as are taught by the wisdom of Man.*

That these Scriptures contain *all things, pertaining to life and to godliness.*

That they were written for the use of mankind; the learned and unlearned alike; and therefore were written in the usual language of men, with the usual signification of that language; as being that only, which such men can understand.

That, therefore, they express true ideas of God, of Christ, of human nature, of human duty, and of the way of salvation, in such a manner, that unlearned men, as are ninety-nine hundredths of those for whom they were written, can, and, if sincerely disposed, will, understand them, so far as is necessary to enable them to perform their duty, and obtain their salvation.

Every one of these doctrines I believe not only to be strictly true, but capable of the most satisfactory proof; and proof, of which I feel myself satisfactorily possessed. Occasional remarks I shall make on this subject in the present discourse; but a fuller discussion of it must be left to a future time. I have mentioned these doctrines *here,* because they are in my view just, important, and necessary to enable those, who hear me, to understand the real import of the following observations.

1st. *The Unitarians, to a great extent, have interpreted the Scriptures according to pre-conceived opinions of their own, and not according to the obvious meaning of the passages themselves.*

That I may not be thought to charge this upon the Unitarians without ground; I will recite some of the opinions, which they themselves have expressed concerning the Scriptures. You may

remember, that in my last discourse, I mentioned, that Dr. *Priestly* pronounces Christ to be fallible; the Scriptures not to be written by particular inspiration; and the writers to make no pretensions to such inspiration. The contrary notion, also, he asserts to be destitute of all proofs, and to have done great injury to the evidence of Christianity. He declares the writers of the New Testament to have improperly quoted some texts from the *Old;* and to have been sometimes misled by *Jewish* prejudices. Another Unitarian writer says, "it is not the nature and design of the Scriptures to decide upon speculative, controverted questions, even in religion and morality; not to solve the doubts, but rather to make us obey the dictates, of our consciences." Mr. *Belsham* says, "The *Beræans* are commended for not taking the word even of an Apostle;" and pleads this as an example for us. *Steinbart*, a foreign *Unitarian*, speaking of the narrations in the New Testament, says, "These narrations, true or false, are only suited to ignorant uncultivated minds." *Semler*, another, says that "*Peter* speaks according to the conception of the *Jews*, when he says, *Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;*" and adds, that "*the prophets may have delivered the offspring of their own brains, as divine revelation.*" Concerning the reasoning of the Apostles, Dr. *Priestly* says, "We are to judge of it, as of that of other men, by a due consideration of the propositions they advance, and the arguments they allege." That men, who entertain such views concerning the Scriptures, will not, and according to their own opinions ought not, to receive the declarations of the Scriptures, in any other manner than that, in which they receive the declarations, contained in every other book, is obvious to the least consideration. If the Scriptures were not written and the writers do not pretend that they wrote, by particular divine inspiration; then they, certainly, stand on the same footing with all other books; and the writers are undoubtedly to be regarded, as Dr. *Priestly* says, merely in the character of Historians and witnesses.

If Christ and the Apostles were fallible men, and *St. Paul* has actually reasoned fallaciously; then undoubtedly their reasonings, and all their doctrines, are to be examined in the same manner, as those of other men. If the Scriptures were not designed to settle speculative opinions or doctrines, even in morality and religion; then it is plain, that they must be settled, if settled at all, by some other tribunal: and there is no other tribunal, but our own reason. If the doubts of conscience were not intended to be solved by the Scriptures, then, certainly, the mind must solve them, so far as it can, for itself. These Gentlemen have, therefore, prescribed a rule for themselves, which every man may certainly know beforehand, even without reading their works, they could not fail to follow: for no man ever believed the Scriptures not to be an infallible rule of direction in these things, who did not also make his

own reason his directory; unless he, indeed, implicitly submitted to the dictates of his fellow-men. In truth it would be difficult to find a man, who does not distinctly perceive, that there is no other directory.

Accordingly, every reader of *Unitarian* books must have observed, that the writers evidently refer the interpretation of the Scriptures to their own pre-conceived opinions, or the previous decisions of their own reason. That is, they form their system of Theology, and then make use of the Scriptures to support, or countenance, it. Wherever they find passages, whose obvious meaning will countenance their own opinions, they make the most of them, by admitting this meaning. Wherever the obvious meaning, that is, the meaning derived from the language, according to customary use, or according to the tenor of the discourse of which it is a part, will not countenance their opinions, they contrive for it some other meaning, which will better suit those opinions.

That the *Unitarians* have actually conducted in this manner, can be made abundantly evident by an appeal to their writings. One strong proof of this conduct is found in the *Arian* notion, *that Christ is a delegated god.* The present occasion will permit me to exhibit but one, out of several modes, in which the truth of this declaration may be evinced. Christ is undeniably many times asserted in the Scriptures to be God. These assertions are as unqualified, and absolute, as those, in which the Father is declared to be GOD. They are also accompanied with a great variety of declarations, in which are ascribed to him, without any qualification, all the attributes, actions, and relations, attributable to GOD, exclusively of those which belong to the Father as such; and are also followed by the very same worship, unconditionally required, and actually rendered to him by inspired men, and by the host of Heaven. Now from all these assertions I will withdraw the name of Christ, and substitute that of the Father. Let me ask, Would any of the *Arians* have ever thought of denying, that the name GOD, in any one of these passages, did not mean the true and real God, but only a God by delegation? To this question there can be no answer, but a negative. Whence, then, do they refuse to acknowledge the same passages to mean the same thing, as they now stand? Plainly for this undeniable reason, that they have beforehand determined, that God is not, and cannot be, Tripersonal, or Triune. In this determination, however, they are unhappy, as being unwarranted, not only by the Scriptures, but also by that very *Reason*, to which they make so confident an appeal: for nothing is more opposed to both, than that a finite, dependent being, can have these things ascribed to him with truth.

On the same grounds do the *Socinians declare Christ to be a mere man;* not because he is not abundantly declared to be God in the Scriptures; but because they pre-determine by their reason, that a person cannot exist by the Union of GOD with man; and

that God cannot be Triune. Let any man read their comments on the Scriptures, relative to Christ; and he will see this to be abundantly shown by the nature of the comments, and the words in which they are uttered.

I have observed, that the *Arians* are unhappy in choosing this position as the basis of their distinguishing doctrine; because it is unwarranted either by Reason, or Revelation. Both *they*, and the *Socinians*, are unhappy on other accounts. They know not, and cannot know, by any dictates of Reason, that God is not Triune. The Nature and Manner of his Existence, so far as this subject is concerned, lie wholly beyond their reach, and beyond that of all other men. We cannot even begin to form ideas concerning them. It is, therefore, idle and fruitless to form propositions about them; still more idle to reason and conclude; and still more idle to make such conclusions the basis of our Faith in a case of such magnitude. All that we know, or can know, is just *that*, and *that only*, which God has been pleased immediately to reveal.

The same observations are, with the same force, applicable to the Doctrine *of the Union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ.* Of this subject we literally know nothing, beside what is revealed.

That a mere man, also, can have these names, attributes, actions, and relations, and this worship, ascribed to him, *with truth*, is not only unaccordant with reason, but common sobriety, or decency. A few more instances of this nature; which, because I have not the means of multiplying examples, nor time for such a purpose; I shall select wholly from Dr. *Priestly's Notes on the books of Scripture.*

In his notes on the first chapter of *John*, Dr. *Priestly* informs us, that *the word* Λογος, which, you know, is translated *the Word, is nothing more than the power of God, by which all things were made; and therefore*, he says, *it was no distinct, inferior principle, but God himself.* On this explanation I shall make but one general remark; (viz.) that this is the only known instance, in which an attribute of God, either in sacred or profane writings, has been asserted to be God. If *St. John*, therefore, had this meaning, he has used language to express it, which was, probably, never used by any other human being.* Having premised this remark, I shall proceed to examine the soundness of the explanation, by the most unobjectionable of all methods; (viz.) *the substitution of the explanation for the thing explained; Power and God*, for *the Word*, or Λογος; as being the two things, which the term Λογος is, successively, declared to denote. This experiment, to which no *Socinian* can object, shall be *first* made with *power*. *In the beginning was the power of God, and this power was with God*, and *this power was God. The same was in the beginning with* God. *All things were made by*

* 1 John iv. 16, to be hereafter explained

*it, and without it was not any thing made, that was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. It was in the world, and the world was made by it, and the world knew it not. It came unto its own, and its own received it not. But as many as received it, to them gave it power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on its name, and the power was made flesh, and dwelt among us; (and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the* FATHER) *full of grace and truth. John bare witness of it, and cried, saying, This was it of which I spake: It that cometh after me is preferred before me, for it was before me. And of its fulness have we all received, and grace for grace. For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

Dr. *Priestly* says the Power was God; St. John says, It was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. According to his comment, therefore, God became flesh, and dwelt among us. According to his comment, also, this Power was Christ; for he says it dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: but St. John immediately subjoins, grace and truth came (that is, into this world) by Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus Christ is God.

This passage, formed in the very manner prescribed by Dr. *Priestly* himself, in his explanation, certainly can need no comment from me. I shall only say, that if there is a *Socinian* in the world, who can make the parts of it, taken together, mean any intelligible thing, I think I may safely yield him the point in controversy.

Let us now make the trial with the other term, *God. In the beginning was God, and God was with God, and God was God.* Two verses more will suffice. *And God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. No one hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

Once more, let us try the same experiment with *the Super-angelic being* of the *Arians. In the beginning was a super-angelic creature*, named *the Word, and this super-angelic creature was with God, and this super-angelic creature was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things mere made by this super-angelic creature, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* I presume, I need proceed no farther. That interpretation of a passage can need nothing added to it, which makes God himself say, *that a creature was in the beginning with God, and was God, and that, although he was himself created, or made; yet he made every thing that was made; and of course made himself.* I had designed to subjoin two or three more specimens; but the time will not permit me to recite them. That, which I have recited, will serve to show to what lengths the interpretation of the Scriptures, according to our pre-conceived opinions, will lead men of superior learning and abilities. At the reading of this only, how

can we avoid exclaiming, *Who is this, that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*

On this plan of interpretation at large I ask, Can it, in any respect, consist with what the Scriptures say of themselves? The prophet *Isaiah*, (chapter viii. 29) says, *To the law, and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

*All Scripture*, says *St. Paul, is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. No prophecy*, says *St. Peter, is of private interpretation: for never at any time was prophecy brought by the will of man; but the holy men of God spake, being moved by the Holy Ghost.** *We*, says *St. Paul*, speaking of himself, and his fellow-apostles, *have the mind of Christ.* And again; *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* And again, *I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel, which was preached of me, was not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

In perfect harmony with these, and the like declarations, *Moses*, the first of the inspired writers, says, *Ye shall not add unto the word, which I command you; neither shall ye diminish aught from it. St. John*, the last of them, says at the close of his writings, *For I testify unto every man, that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues, that are written in this book. And, if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.* From these passages it is evident that the character, which the Scriptures attribute to themselves, is altogether opposite to that, which has been mentioned in the former part of this discourse, as given to them by *Unitarian* writers: That they are in fact *revealed by God*, by *the inspiration of the Holy Ghost:* That *no man*, therefore, *can add to them, or diminish aught from them*, without exposing himself to the *plagues* which they denounce, and to the loss of *his part in the book of life. If we speak not according to them* it is declared that *there is no light in us.* In our interpretations of them, we are directed in the most solemn manner to receive the things which they declare. *Let God be true*, says the Apostle, *but every man a liar. See*, says *Agur, that thou add not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. If we*, says *St. Paul, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.* Who, with these solemn commands, and awful denunciations before him, can think, for a moment, of rejecting the obvious meaning of the

* Macknight

Scriptures, and substituting a meaning, not contained in the words, but contrived by himself?

Nor are these gentlemen less unfortunate in another important particular. The Scriptures were written for mankind at large. Of these, ninety-nine hundredths, to say the least, are plain, uninformed men, incapable of understanding language in any other manner, than the known, customary one. If, then, the obvious meaning is not the true one; *they* are absolutely unable ever to find the true one; and so far the Scriptures were written in vain. But it cannot be supposed, that God would do any thing in vain; and still less, that He would disregard the salvation, and the souls, of ninety-nine hundredths of his creatures, when publishing his word; and cause it to be so written, that this great number could not, if ever so sincerely disposed, possibly find out its meaning, nor of course, the way to eternal life: while at the same time, He made provision for the remaining *one* hundredth. It will not, I suppose, be pretended, that the soul of a learned man is of more value in the sight of God, than that of an unlearned man. But if the meaning of the Scriptures is to be discovered, not by the words, but by a contrived accordance with pre-conceived philosophical opinions, no unlearned man can find out this meaning at all.

But the Scriptures themselves have decided this point. In Prov. viii. 8, 9, Christ says, *All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse, in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth;* (that is, to him that hath understanding; or, in other words, to him that departeth from evil) *and right to them that find knowledge.* In John vii. 16, 17, the same glorious Person says, *My doctrine* (that is, the scheme of doctrine which I teach) *is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his Will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.* Now it will not be pretended, that plain men do not depart from evil, as truly, and as often in proportion to their number, as learned men. Of course, it must be confessed, that plain men find a plain meaning in the words of Christ, or of the Scriptures. It will be acknowledged, that unlearned men, in many instances at least, *do the will of God:* and therefore, unless Christ has erred in this point, *know of his doctrine, whether it is of God.*

One more passage will be amply sufficient to cut off even *cavilling* on this point. The prophet *Isaiah* (chapter xxxv. and 8th) says, *An highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness; and the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* It will hardly be necessary to observe that this *highway, this way of holiness*, is no other than the Gospel. But it is evidently impossible, that plain men should ever find the meaning, attached by *Unitarians* to the numerous passages, which speak of Christ as God. No such man would ever mistrust, that a Super-angelic creature was *called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace:* That *of the in-*

*crease of his Government and peace there should be no end*, Isaiah ix. 6. *That his goings forth were from of old, from everlasting*: or, as in the original, *from the days of eternity*: or that this creature *was in the beginning, with God, and was God.* That *all things were made by him, and that without him was not any thing made that was made.* Or that *he was over all things, God blessed for evermore.* No such man would ever have thought of reading, *In the beginning was divine power, and this power was with God, and this power was God.* That *it was in the world*; that *the world was made by it; and the world knew it not. That as many as received it, to them gave it power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on its name. That this power became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of it, and cried, saying, this was it of which I spake. It that cometh after me is preferred before me, for it was before me.* No plain man would ever have thought of reading, *In the beginning was God, and God was with God, and God was God.*

Should it be said in opposition to the observations, which I have made concerning the intelligibleness of the Scriptures, that my antagonists will grant, that the Scriptures are thus plain, in points of essential importance to our duty and salvation; but need not be supposed to be so in mere speculative opinions; I answer, that *no doctrine is of more importance, whether speculative or practical, than that, which teaches the character of Christ; except that, which teaches the existence and perfections of God.* If Christ be a creature; all the worship, and all other regard, rendered to him as the Creator, is unquestionably mere Idolatry: the sin, which of all sins is the most strongly threatened, and reproved, in the Scriptures. If Christ is God; then a denial that he is God, is all that is meant by impiety. It is a denial of his primary and essential Character; of the Attributes, which in this character belong to him; of the Relations, which he sustains to the Universe, and will for ever sustain; of the actions, which he has performed, and will perform throughout eternity; and of the essential *glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was.* Man is a being, made up of an animal body and a rational mind. Should I deny, that a particular person possessed a rational mind; would it not be justly said, that I denied him to be a man, and refused to acknowledge his primary and most essential character? If Christ is God-man; and I deny him to be God; do I not, at least as entirely, deny his primary and most essential character? In other words, do I not plainly *deny the Lord that bought me?* It is evidently impossible for him, who makes this denial, to render to Christ those regards; that confidence, love, reverence, and obedience; which a man, who believed Christ to be God, would feel himself indispensably bound to render. Indeed were it possible, he would necessarily, and in the very act of rendering them, condemn himself as guilty of Idol-

atry. On the other hand, he, who believes Christ to be God, cannot refuse to render them, without condemning himself as guilty, and without being actually guilty, of the plainest and grossest impiety; because he withholds from the true GOD, the homage and obedience, due to his character. The *Unitarians* censure the system of the *Trinitarians* as being idolatrous, and them as being Idolaters. If the *Unitarian* scheme is true, the censure is just. *We*, on the other hand, and with equal justice, if our scheme is true, declare them to be guilty of direct and gross impiety; because they worship not *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;* the JEHOVAH of the Scriptures; the JEHOVAH ALEIM, *who is one* JEHOVAH; but another and very different God.

The admission of the Deity of Christ, therefore, if he be really God, is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity; mistakes about which are altogether dangerous and dreadful. This is plainly felt to be the case by the plain people, even among the *Socinians*. For Mrs. *Barbauld* informs us, that although the errors of the Trinitarians "are losing ground among thinking people, yet there is in that class, (among the Socinians) who are called serious Christians, a sort of leaning towards them; an idea that they are, if not true, at least good to be believed; and that a salutary error is better than a dangerous truth."

Can it then be believed, that God can have directed the Scriptures to be so written, that the true meaning of them in a case of this fundamental importance; a case, in which mankind are in so imminent danger of becoming either impious, or idolatrous; is so obscure, as to make plain men utterly unable to find it out, however honestly disposed; and that the great body of religious men should in all ages of the Church, have totally and infinitely mistaken their real intention? Can that mode of interpretation, which leads of course to this conclusion, be the true one?

II. *The Unitarians reject the doctrine, that Christ is* GOD, *and the obvious meaning of all those passages which teach it, because the doctrine is mysterious.*

This I object to as a totally irrational ground of such rejection. There are two reasons, which will effectually prove this irrationality.

1st. *All mankind readily admit, and, if they believe any thing, must every moment admit, mysteries, as the objects of their faith.* This world is made up of *atoms*. What are they? Dr. *Priestly* informs us, that they are *centres of attraction and repulsion*. This definition, translated out of *Latin English* into *Saxon English*, is, *that atoms are centres of drawing to, and driving from:* a definition, which, I believe, it would puzzle Dr. *Priestly* himself to unriddle, and at least as applicable to points of space as to atoms. They are also defined to be *solid extended somethings*. What is the something thus solid and extended? Here our inquiries are stopped, and an atom is found to be an absolute mystery. The world

is made up of atoms. What binds them together, so as to constitute a world? *Attraction*, it is answered. What is attraction? To this there is no answer. The world, then, on which we tread, in which we live, and about which we think we have extensive knowledge, is wholly formed out of particles, absolutely mysterious, bound together by a power equally mysterious.

These atoms constitute *vegetables*. What is a vegetable? "An organized body," it is answered; "the subject of vegetable life." What is vegetable life? To this question there is no satisfactory answer. In the same manner are we conducted to a speedy end in all our inquiries concerning the mineral, vegetable, and rational worlds.

Mystery meets us at every step, and lies at the bottom of the whole. The power, by which this discourse was thought, or written, or spoken, defies all human investigation.

If mysteries, then, are found every where in the *works of God;* can it be supposed, that they are not found in *the character and being of the same God?* There is nothing more mysterious, more absolutely inexplicable, in the doctrine of the Trinity, than in the power by which, and the manner in which, Mind acts upon Matter.

2dly. *The Unitarians themselves, though professedly rejecting mysteries, admit them into their creed without number.* That a créature created all things, upholds all things, possesses all things, rules all things, and is the final cause of their existence; that a creature should be *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;* that he should be the final Judge and Rewarder of the just and the unjust; that he should sit on the throne of the heavens, and receive the prayers of inspired men in *this* world, and the everlasting praises of the Heavenly host in the world to come; or that God, if these things are not so, should have caused, or permitted, them to be written in his Word; are, to say the least, mysteries as entire, and as inexplicable, as any, which have ever entered the thoughts of man. It ill becomes those, who admit these things, therefore, to reject any thing, merely on account of its being mysterious.

III. *The Unitarians take an unwarrantable license with the language of the Scriptures.*

I know not, that I can express my own views of this subject, within the same compass, better, than in the following words of a respectable writer, which are a part of some observations concerning Dr. *Priestly's* Notes on the Scriptures. "It is a leading and determined purpose of Dr. *Priestly's* Notes to serve the cause of what is arrogantly termed *Unitarianism;* and he has certainly kept this purpose in view. To say the least, he is a zealous and resolute advocate. His maxim seems to have been, to maintain his cause at all events. Seldom is he at a loss for a gloss, or an evasion, in aiming at the accomplishment of his object. If he meets with a passage, whose indubitable reading, and whose obvious, plain meaning, are such, as every unbiassed man would pronounce

favourable to the Deity and atonement of Christ; the Doctor is ready with ample stores of metaphorical, enigmatical, and idiomatical, forms of interpretation; and stubborn must be that text, which will not bend under one, or other, of his modes of treatment. In some cases *a various reading*, though none of the best, is called in to his assistance. Should this aid fail, *some learned critic, or other*, is at hand *with a conjectural alteration*. Or if none of these means appear advisable, the philosophical commentator has in reserve a kind of *logical alkali*, which will at least neutralize a pungent passage; for example, *the sage observation: "About the interpretation of it critics differ much."*

"And, lastly, in very desperate instances a method is resorted to, the most simple and compendious imaginable; and that is, *to say nothing at all about them!*"

One of the modes, in which the *Unitarians* take unwarrantable license with the language of the Scriptures, is *to pronounce passages to be interpolated, which are abundantly evidenced by Manuscripts, ancient Versions, and Quotations in writings of the Fathers, to be genuine parts of the Scriptures.*

Another is, *to declare, without warrant, words, and phrases, to be wanting; and then to supply them; where they are supplied by no authority but their own.* Thus *Grotius* and Dr. *Clark* supply the word εστω in that remarkable text, Romans ix. 5; and then translate it, *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God* BE *blessed for evermore.*

This, it will be observed, does not aid them at all, because, *he who is over all things, is* of course *God.*

Another mode is, *to annex a meaning to some particular word or phrase, which suits their own purpose, but which is entirely aside from all customary use.* Thus Pierce interprets ȣκ αρπαγμον ηγησατο το ειναι ισα Θεω; *He thought it no robbery to be equal with God;* to mean, *He was not eager, or tenacious, to retain that likeness to God:* a translation, which no criticism can justify, or satisfactorily explain.

Another mode, of the same nature, is *to suggest the conjectural opinion of some other critic, or some learned friend;* which is introduced with so much gravity, as to give a kind of weight, and speciousness, to the peculiar interpretation proposed. Thus Dr. *Priestly*,* commenting on John xiv. 2: *In my Father's house are many mansions;* says, "Perhaps, with a learned friend of mine, we may understand *the mansions in his father's house*, of which *Jesus* here speaks, to signify, not places of rest and happiness in heaven, but *stations of trust and usefulness upon earth;* such as he was then about to quit," &c. Here *the house of God* is made to mean *earth and mansions, stations;* and Christ of course was *going away*, to prepare a place for his Apostles *here*, where he and they then were; and was to come again, to receive them in the place,

* Eclectic Review, No. 2d. Vol. 2d.

whither he himself was going, that *they might be with him* there, by continuing here.

Another mode, of the same nature, is *an unbounded license in making the Scriptural language figurative.*

That the language of the Scriptures is to a great extent, and in a high degree, figurative, is unquestionably true. But certainly there are limits to this character, not only in Scriptural, but all other, language. It must, I think, be admitted, that we are to consider the language of the Scriptures especially, and of all other good writings generally, as figurative, only in accordance with the following rules:

1st. That the figure be agreeable to the state of the mind of him who uses it; that is, to his views and feelings.

2dly. That it be founded on some analogy, or relation to the subject.

3dly. That it accord with the discourse, so far as to make sense.

4thly. That in the Scriptures it violate no doctrine declared, at least by the Writer.

5thly. That it be so obvious, as not to demand invention or contrivance, in the reader.

6thly. That it be explicable according to the opinions, or other circumstances, of those, for whom it was written, so as to be capable of being understood by them.

7thly. That it suit the occasion, and other circumstances, of the discourse.

But how, according to these, or any other, rules of construing language, are we to interpret the declaration, *For by him, were created all things, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,* to mean, that *Christ published the Gospel and constituted the Christian Church? Is it the same thing to publish the Gospel, as to create? Is it the same thing to constitute the church, as to create?*

Are *the Gospel and the Church all things that are in Heaven and that are in earth?* Are they *all things visible and invisible?* Who are the *thrones*, the *dominions*, the *principalities*, and the *powers?* Are they Bishops, Elders, and Deacons: the only officers, ever supposed to belong to the Church?

The Holy Ghost is by *Unitarians* denied to be a person, and is commonly asserted to be no other than *the power of God:* The name *Spirit* being, in their view, always figurative. According to what rules of construction are we, on this plan, to interpret the following passages; in which I shall substitute the word *power* for *Ghost*, or *Spirit;* always intending by it, however, *the divine power.*

*All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Power shall not be forgiven unto men*, Matt. xii. 31. *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and*

*of the Son, and of the Holy Power*, Matt. xxviii. 19. *Why has Satan filled thy heart, to lie unto the Holy Power?* Acts v. 3. *God anointed Jesus with the Holy Power and with power*, Acts x. 33. Romans xv. 13, *That ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Power.* Romans xv. 19, *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the Power of the Power of God. In demonstration of the Power, and of Power.* John xvi. 13, *Howbeit, when he the Power of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*, &c. &c.

More instances cannot, I think, be necessary to elucidate this part of the subject.

The last mode, which I shall mention, a mode adopted when a passage is too stubborn to bend to any of the preceding, is, *to leave it with such an observation as this: "Critics are very much divided about the meaning of this passage;"* insinuating to the reader, that the passage is so obscure and perplexed, that he is to despair of any explanation.

In this manner, it seems to me, the Scriptures must soon become such as the Prophet *Isaiah* declared they would become to the Jews, at a certain future period. *The vision of all*, says that Prophet, chapter xxix. 11, *is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed; which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; And he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed*, and the book is delivered *to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.*

IV. *I object to the Unitarians direct unfairness in their conduct towards Trinitarians.*

The unfairness, here intended, respects two particulars.

1st. *They treat the Trinitarians, as if they were Tritheists, or held the existence of three Gods.*

This they do in several methods, particularly, *the name Unitarian*, as I formerly observed, *is designed to denote, that they, among Christians, exclusively hold the existence of one God.* The very name itself, therefore, is intended to declare, *that Trinitarians hold the existence of more Gods than one.* An imputation, which, they well know, every *Trinitarian* rejects with abhorrence.

Again; in arguing with *Trinitarians, they customarily undertake to prove, that the Scriptures, in a great variety of passages, assert that there is but one God; as if this were the very point, or at least one point, in debate between them and Trinitarians.* Accordingly, when they have proved this point, which a child can easily do, they commonly triumph, and appear to consider the dispute as ended, and their antagonists overthrown. In this way they insinuate, to their readers, that Trinitarians hold the existence of more Gods than one; and that all their arguments are intended to support this doctrine. Whereas every Unitarian perfectly well knows, that the unity of God is as entirely, and as professedly, holden by

Trinitarians as himself; that none of their arguments are directed against it; and that this point has never been, and never can be, in debate between him and them. That the doctrine of the Trinity involves, or infers, the existence of more Gods than one, every Unitarian has a right to prove; and may with perfect fairness prove, if he can. But to insinuate, that Trinitarians believe the existence of more Gods than one, and to treat them as if they thus believed, when it is perfectly well known that every Trinitarian disclaims such belief with indignation; is conduct, which, in my view, admits of no justification.

2dly. *The Unitarians customarily undertake to prove that Christ is a man; and thence triumph also, as if they had refuted the doctrine of their opposers.* Now it is well known to every Unitarian, *that the Trinitarians with one voice acknowledge Christ to be a man;* and that this point, therefore, is not in controversy between him and them.

It is wholly disengenuous, therefore, to insinuate that it is in debate; or to attempt to make it a part of the controversy, when they know, that Trinitarians as uniformly hold it as themselves. Of these facts, however, they usually take not the least notice, but appear to consider both points as the principal topics in debate. Such conduct in their antagonists, the *Unitarians* would censure with severity.

I shall conclude this discussion with two observations.

The first is, *that the Unitarians are extensively disagreed concerning the person of Christ.* The *Arians* consider him as a Super-angelic being: The *Socinians* partly as a man, *in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, and partly as a man, differing from other men only by being wiser and better: The *Sabellians*, as God manifested in one manner. The *Patripassians*, as the Father living, and suffering, in the man Jesus Christ. Some of the *Unitarians* hold, that he created the Universe; some, that he made an atonement for sin; some, that he ought to be worshipped; and some deny all these doctrines. This difference is derived from two sources: one is, that their reason, or philosophy, dictates nothing concerning Christ, in which they can harmonize. The other is, that the Scriptures in no very satisfactory manner support either of their opinions. But it ought to be observed, that this very difference is of such a nature, as strongly to indicate, that the Scriptures exhibit Christ as God.

The second observation is, *that Unitarianism has an evident tendency to infidelity.*

This is strongly evident in the manner, in which the Unitarians speak of the Scriptures; the insufficiency which they attribute to them for settling religious doctrines; and the superior sufficiency, which they attribute to Reason. It is evident, also, in the laxness of their ideas concerning what genuine religion is; their want of veneration for the Sabbath; their want of attendance on the public

worship of God; and their devotion to the pleasures and amusements of life.

Dr. *Priestly* acknowledges, that "*the Unitarian Societies do not flourish; that their members have but a slight attachment to them, and, easily desert them.*"

*Voltaire* also says, "*that down to his own time, only a very small number of those, called Unitarians, had held any religious meetings.*"

Dr. *Priestly* also says, that "*many Unitarians have become more indifferent to religion in general, than they were before; and to all the modes and doctrines of religion.*" Concerning himself, he says, "*that he was once a Calvinist, and that of the straitest sect; then a high Arian; next a low Arian; then a Socinian; and in a little time a Socinian of the lowest kind, in which Jesus Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses, or any other Prophet.*" He also says, "*he does not know when his creed will be fixed.*" This I consider as the true progress, nature, and tendency, of Unitarianism. The end of this progress in most men is easily foreseen. Let him, therefore, who finds himself inclined to think favourably of these opinions, consider well, before he embraces them, what will probably be the final termination of his religious system.

# SERMON XLII.

INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

ROMANS viii. 3.—*God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.*

I HAVE, in several preceding discourses, endeavoured to settle the meaning of the phrase, *God's own Son*, used in this passage of the Scriptures. This was indispensably necessary, at the opening of all the observations, intended to be made concerning the doctrines of the Christian system. As these doctrines are truths partly unfolding to us the character and conduct of this wonderful person, and partly disclosing to us the consequences of his interference in the behalf of mankind; as his character, in a greater or less degree, affects every doctrine of what is appropriately called the Christian Religion; and as those, who set out with different views of his character, proceed farther and farther asunder, so as to form in the end entirely different systems of religious doctrine; it became indispensable, that this great point should, as far as possible, be fixed at the beginning. If the attempt to do this has been successful, in the degree which I have hoped, it will contribute not a little to settle on a firm foundation most of the doctrines, which remain to be investigated. My own views concerning them, it will, at least, contribute to explain.

In this passage we are informed, that *God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.* The meaning of this phrase, (*the likeness of sinful flesh*) will be obvious from similar phrases in Philippians ii. 7, 8, *He was made*, or, as it is in the original, *He existed, in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man.* In the *first* of these phrases, the original word, ομοιωματι, is the same with that translated *likeness*, in the text. In the *second*, it is σχηματι; a term of a kindred signification, denoting *form*, or *fashion.* In the passage in *Philippians*, the phrases, *He existed in the likeness of men*, and, *He was found in fashion as a man*, denote, that he was a real man. In the text, the phrase, *the likeness of sinful flesh*, denotes, that *he was sent in real flesh;* here figuratively called *sinful*, because it is in all other instances, except that of Christ, *the flesh*, or body, *of sinful beings.*

The Doctrine, contained in this passage, is, therefore, the following:

THAT CHRIST, WHEN HE APPEARED IN THIS WORLD, WAS A REAL MAN.

This doctrine, like *that of the Deity of Christ*, has been extensively disputed.

The Heretics, generally, who embraced the *Gnostic* philosophy, denied Christ to have been a man. Some individuals, and some classes, held, that he was clothed in a body of air; that he suffered only in appearance; and that *Judas Iscariot* suffered in his stead.

To all these and the like doctrines, they were led by philosophizing on this subject. It is a just observation of *Lardner*, that "Heretics were, in the general, men of a curious and inquisitive turn of mind, and greatly indulged this disposition, which led them to speculate on many points of doctrine, concerning which the Scriptures had afforded little or no light. When the Scriptures were in some cases inconsistent with their notions, they were for making them yield to their philosophical opinions. Thus the simplicity of truth was banished, and endless divisions arose." *Tertullian*, also, says, that "heresies are derived from philosophy; and that secular wisdom is a rash (or fool-hardy) interpreter of the Divine nature, and disposition." These observations are with equal force and justice, applicable to heresies of modern days, and those of the ancients; and few of either will be found to have arisen from any other source, beside a philosophy, too proud, or too knowing, to submit implicitly to the testimony of God.

There are two modes of conduct, with respect to Religion, in which the mind may be justly said to act rationally. One is *to determine, antecedently to our knowledge of a revelation, as well as we can, what is religious truth, by our Reason;* the other, *to find out and embrace, when we have become acquainted with Revelation, what it declares to be religious truth.* In the former of these situations, *Reason* is our only guide. In the latter, its only business is to discover whether the professed Revelation is a real one; and, after this point is settled affirmatively, to discover, and receive, whatever it declares. *God* has now become our guide; and, as He can neither deceive, nor be deceived, our duty is to receive his testimony implicitly. Had this plain and equitable rule been uniformly followed, Christianity would never have been thus distorted; nor the Church rent asunder by such lamentable divisions.

The reason why the *Docetae*, one class of the ancient *Unitarians*, denied Christ to be a man, was the general principle of the *Gnostics: that moral evil has its seat in Matter.* Hence they held that the human soul, which they believed to have been originally pure, derived its contamination solely from its union with the body. It was no unnatural consequence, for those, who embraced this doctrine, to adopt the impossibility of an union between God and the human body; since such an union was, of course, supposed to be capable of contaminating even the Divine purity.

Their philosophy, therefore, seems necessarily to have led them into the conclusion, *that Christ, whom they believed to be God, was never united to a human body.* In the same manner has the philosophy of other sects led them, also, to embrace doctrines, directly opposed to the express declarations of the Scriptures.

*That Christ was a man in the absolute sense*, is easily made evident by many kinds of proof, and by almost numberless passages of Scripture.

1st. *He is called a man, and the son of man, in a very great multitude of instances.*

The number of instances, in which he has this latter appellation, is no less than *Seventy-one*. In sixty-seven of these instances it is given to him by *himself;* once by *Daniel;* once by *St. Stephen;* and twice by *St. John* in the Revelation. In giving this appellation to himself, it will, I suppose, be acknowledged, that he disclosed his real character, and was, what he calls himself, *the Son of Man.*

When he is styled a man, also, he is described with just such characteristics, those excepted, which involve error, or sin, as belong to other men.

He is exhibited as meek, lowly, and dutiful to his parents; as hungry, thirsty, and weary; as sustained, and refreshed, by food, drink, and sleep; as the subject of natural affection; as weeping with tenderness and sorrow; as the subject of temptations, infirmities, and afflictions; and, generally, as having all the innocent characteristics, which belong to our nature.

2dly. *The history of his birth, life, and death, is unanswerable proof, that Christ was a man.* Christ was born, lived, and died, essentially in the same manner, as other men. He *increased in wisdom*, as well as *in stature;* wrought with his hands; ate; drank; slept; suffered on the cross; gave up the Ghost; and was buried; in the same manner as other men.

3dly. *This point is argued at large, and proved, by St. Paul, in the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews.*

In the passage, containing this argument, are the following declarations: *For as much, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same:* and, *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.*

The proofs, which I have alleged, will, it is presumed, be considered as abundantly sufficient. That Christ had a human body cannot be questioned. It is equally unquestionable, that to increase in wisdom, to be tempted, to be sorrowful, to be dutiful to human parents, together with many other things of a similar nature, are attributable neither to *God*, nor to *the human body*, but are appropriate characteristics of *the human soul.* Christ, therefore, had a human soul, as well as a human body; and was in the absolute sense a man.

But he was not a man only.

This, also, is evident from numerous scriptural declarations. *St. Paul* says, Philippians ii. 5, *He, who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, Nevertheless made himself of no reputation;* (εκενωσε, *emptied himself, or devested himself*, of this *form of God;* the glory and greatness which he before

possessed) and *taking upon himself the form of a servant, was born (or existed) in the likeness of men.* It is not my intention, in quoting this passage, to insist on the Deity of Christ, so unequivocally declared in it; but only to observe, that He, who was thus a man, was, antecedently to his appearance in this human character, a person, entirely distinct from what he was as a man.

Antecedently to his *being born in the likeness of men*, he *existed; and existed in the form of God; and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, Nevertheless,* ἑαυτον εκενωσε, *he emptied himself.* He existed, therefore, previously to his appearance as a man; and *emptied himself*, voluntarily, when he (voluntarily, also) *took upon himself the form of a servant, and was born in the likeness of men.* In other words, the person, here spoken of as *being in the form of God*, became incarnate. This person, I have attempted to show, was divine; and no other than *the Word, or Son, of God.*

The great objection to the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, is an objection of Philosophy only; and in my view a very unphilosophical objection. "*It is a doctrine,*" say the objecters, "*wholly mysterious and inexplicable.*"

After what was urged in the preceding discourse, on the subject of mysteries, very little can be thought necessary to be added here. Let it, however, be observed, that the truth of the objection is cheerfully acknowledged by me; and, so far as I know, by all who hold this doctrine. At the same time, it is an objection without force; *and is idly urged*, to say the least, *by Unitarians.* When the *Arians* will explain how their Super-angelic being became the infant, and ultimately the man, Jesus Christ; and did, and suffered, and accomplished, the things asserted of Christ; when the *Socinians* will explain how he, who was created by the Holy Ghost, was born of *Joseph and Mary;* how organized Matter thinks; how he, who began to exist at his birth, *existed* antecedently *in the form of God; emptied himself; and was* then *born in the likeness of men;* and when both, or either, of them will explain how the things, said in the Scriptures concerning Christ, are true, and at the same time consistent with their respective schemes; or how God could say them, if they were not true: I think I may venture upon an attempt to explain the mystery of the Incarnation. Until we know the nature of the Divine Existence, and the nature of the human soul; we shall never be able to determine how far God may unite himself with such a soul, or whether such an union is impossible.

On this and every other question, concerning the nature of the Divine Existence, and of the existence of finite minds, we cannot even begin to form ideas; but must be indebted for whatever facts we either know, or believe, to the testimony of God.

For aught that we are able to determine, a finite mind may be so far united to the Infinite Mind, as that all the views, affections, purposes, ends, and agency, of both, which are not discordant in their very nature, may exactly coincide; and, independently of

their character as finite, or infinite, constitute but a single character, and a single agency. But, as I have before said, for all our just conceptions on this subject, we are, and must, be, indebted to the testimony of God only; and beyond this testimony, as well as without it, we literally know nothing.

This testimony, as it relates to the doctrine under consideration, is in my view complete. That Christ is truly and essentially God has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently evinced; and also that he appeared in this world a Man in the absolute and perfect sense. This account of his character will be advantageously elucidated by a summary comparison of the representations, made of him in both these characters.

*As God* it is said,

That he is God, the true God, the mighty God, the great God, Jehovah, I am, and Emmanuel, &c. That his goings forth were from of old, from everlasting; that he was in the beginning set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was, &c. That he was in the beginning with God; rejoicing alway before him; present, when he prepared the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and possessed of glory with him before ever the world was.

With reference to his greatness *as God*, united to man, it is said, that *Gabriel* predicted his birth, an Angel declared to the Shepherds of *Bethlehem*, that he was born, and a choir of the Heavenly Host sung together his natal hymn.

That he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

That all things are his; that he upholds them by the word of his power, and that they were made for him, and by him.

That he is Lord of All things, of Angels, Principalities, and Powers; and will subdue, and is able to subdue, all things unto himself, and put all opposition

*As Man* it is said,

That he was an Infant, a Child, a Man, a Carpenter, the son of Joseph and Mary, and the brother, or cousin-german, of James and Joses. That he was born in the reign of Herod the Great, and of the Roman Emperor *Augustus Cæsar*.

That he was born in *Judea*; in *Bethlehem*, the city of *David*; in the stable of an Inn; and was cradled in a manger.

That he was refused a place in the Inn, forgotten in the Stable, and unfurnished even with the ordinary comforts, provided for the children of peasants.

That he grew while a Child, really and perceptibly, in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man; and therefore changed, day by day; and that through his life.

That he had not where to lay his head, and was sustained, without any property of his own, by the bounty of his disciples; and at times, of others.

That he was subject to the Jewish and Roman Government, paid tribute, and performed all the usual duties of a child to his parents, and of a subject to his ruler; and was exposed to the

under his feet; and that his throne and dominion are for ever and ever.

That he was originally rich in the possession of all things; and the continual delight of his Father in the heavens; where the Angels unceasingly worshipped him.

That at the close of this world, he will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and with all his holy Angels; will summon the dead from their graves; will gather all nations before the throne of his glory; will judge both Angels and men according to their works; will punish the wicked with an everlasting destruction from the glory of his power; will conduct the righteous into heaven; and will cause them to live, and reign, with him for ever and ever.

Finally, in his divine character it is said, that he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

direct assaults and temptations of the Devil.

That for our sakes he became poor, afflicted, despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; lightly esteemed, hated, and persecuted.

That he was betrayed by Judas; seized by the Roman soldiers; brought before the Sanhedrim; judged; condemned to death; again brought before Pilate, judged, and condemned; buffetted; crowned with thorns; mocked; spit upon; scourged; nailed to the cross; and carried to the tomb.

But that having emptied himself, and taken upon him the form of a servant, he was born in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

At the close of this wonderful career he was raised from the dead. He himself informs us, that *he laid down his own life* voluntarily, and that *no one was able to take it out of his hands.* He also informs us, that *he himself took it up again.* Accordingly, he rose from the grave on the third day; and, after conversing familiarly with his disciples, *concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*, forty days, he ascended to Heaven in a cloud of glory, attended by the Heavenly host; entered the world of glory in triumph; and *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:* or as it is elsewhere expressed, *This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down for ever on the right hand of God. At his name*, henceforth, *every knee is required to bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue to confess, that he is the Lord*, or Sovereign of all things, *to the glory of God the Father.* The throne of infinite dominion is accordingly, and appropriately, styled *the throne of God and the Lamb.* Before this throne, *the four living ones cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and who art, and who art to come. The four-and-twenty Elders cast their crowns at his feet, and say, Thou art*

*worthy, O Lord! to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. And the multitude of Angels round about the throne, and the living ones, and the Elders, say with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; and every creature which is in Heaven, on the earth, under the earth, and in the sea, is heard, saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.* To this divine ascription, the four Living Ones subjoin their solemn *Amen*.

On this comparative view of the wonderful subject, under consideration, I make the following remarks.

1st. *It is evident to the least consideration, that the things, which are here said of Christ, are exceedingly unlike each other.* So unlike are they, that, if we suppose two beings to be the subjects of holiness; their characters cannot be more different from each other, than the things are, which are here declared concerning Christ.

Let any man attempt to describe two, the most distant, characters of two, the most distant, holy beings; and he will find himself unable to place them farther asunder, than these two characters of Christ are placed. Therefore,

2dly. *These two characters cannot be given to any being, possessed of a simple nature.*

That they are all truly said, will not be here called in question. If we suppose the person, of whom they are said, *to be only God;* we shall be obliged either to say, with the *Sabellians*, that Christ was no other than God manifesting himself in one particular form; or, with the *Patripassians*, that the Father lived here, suffered, and died, as a man; or, with the *Docetae*, that Christ was God only; that his appearance as a man was an illusion; that he had a visionary body; and suffered only in appearance and pretence; while *Judas Iscariot*, or some other culprit, was crucified in his stead.

It is plainly impossible, that the same simple being should be *set up from everlasting, be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending; and yet be born in Judea, in the reign of Herod the Great: Be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;* and yet *increase in wisdom, and in favour with God and man: Create all things visible and invisible;* and yet *be made of a woman:* be the Lawgiver to the Universe; and yet *be made under the Law: Uphold all things by the word of his power;* and yet be a petitioner for the daily supplies of his wants, and the protection of his person: Possess all things, and yet *have not where to lay his head: Know all things*, and yet not know as, if we adopt the common interpretation, we must suppose he did not know, the time of the destruction of *Jerusalem:* Be the final Judge and Rewarder of the quick and the dead, and yet be tried, condemned, and executed by men: and *be in the form of*

*God*, and justly *think it no robbery to be equal with God*, and yet *be a servant*, a man, and a frail and dying man.

But all these things, and innumerable others, substantially of the same nature, in both respects, are declared concerning Christ. All, also, are declared by God himself. They are, therefore, true; and true, in the natural, obvious sense. Of course, they are *worthy of all acceptation.*

It follows, then; *that Christ is*, notwithstanding the sneers of Unitarians, *God and Man.* In the language of the Scriptures, *The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.* Yet, humble as were the station and circumstances in which he appeared, *we* are able still to *behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the* FATHER.

3dly. *There are three important facts, recorded concerning Christ, in which he differs wholly from all created beings, and which merit the attentive consideration of every serious man.*

1. *He always taught in his own name; even when altering, and annulling, the acknowledged Word of God.*

Christ came, to change the *Mosaic* system into the Christian; and accordingly substituted the latter for the former. In every part of this employment He taught in his own name. The preceding Prophets had uniformly introduced their Instructions with *Thus saith the Lord; Thus saith Jehovah.* Christ, immediately after addressing his consolations to his disciples by way of preface, introduces his Sermon on the Mount in the following manner: *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets:* that is, the system of Religion in the Old Testament: *I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you*, &c. This phraseology he repeats every where throughout this Sermon, and throughout the Gospel. Not once does he say, *Thus saith the Lord*, during his Ministry; nor teach with any authority except his own. Now it is evident, that the authority, which he actually assumed, was equal in his view, and in the view of the Scriptures, to that, which sanctioned the declarations of the Old Testament; because he changes, and annuls, both the doctrines and the precepts of the Old Testament, at his pleasure.

In the same manner when he appeared unto *St. Paul* in the way to *Damascus*, after informing *Paul*, that he was *Jesus, whom he persecuted*, he commissioned him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and sent him as his Apostle to them, by his own authority, without appealing to any other.

As, therefore, the authority, assumed in these cases, is equivalent to that, by which the Old Testament was revealed; He, who rightfully assumed it, was God.

The same authority, also, Christ assumed, and exhibited, generally, *when he wrought miracles;* and he never makes mention of any other.

2. *The Apostles uniformly appeal to the authority of Christ in their preaching and miracles.*

*In the name of Jesus Christ*, says *St. Peter* to the impotent man, *rise up, and walk.*

*By what power*, said the *Sanhedrim* to *Peter* and his companions, *or by what name, have you done this?* that is, healed the impotent man? *Be it known unto you all*, answered the Apostle, *and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him, doth this man stand here before you whole. Æneas*, said *Peter*, *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. All authority*, says our Saviour, *is delivered to me in Heaven and in Earth. As my Father hath sent me, so send I you.*

Under this commission the Apostles preached, and acted; and in multiplied instances have declared to us, that it was the authority of God.

A single declaration of this sort will suffice for them all. Mark xvi. 20, *And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

3. *In the Revelation of St. John, it is to be observed, Christ receives the praises of the Heavenly host, both singly and in conjunction with the Father, but never unites in them.*

Neither Christ, nor the Holy Spirit, is ever called upon to perform the great duty of all creatures to praise God, or to pray to Him. Both these duties Christ performed as a man, when here on earth; but he is never exhibited as performing the duty of praise in Heaven. All other virtuous beings are exhibited as making this their constant worship, and a prime part of their duty. But amid all their ascriptions of praise to God, Christ is no where exhibited as uniting with them in this duty; in itself so delightful to a virtuous mind, and so naturally and obviously obligatory on every rational being. The whole multitude of saints and angels, with the four living ones at their head, join, without exception, in the Heavenly song; *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne.* But the only part, ever attributed to Christ, is to be united, in receiving the ascription, together with *Him that sitteth on the throne:* for the ascription is made *to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.**

I have now finished the observations, which I intended to make concerning this interesting subject; and exhibited what appears to me to be the true meaning of the remarkable phraseology in the text. *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and of other similar passages found in the Scriptures: such as, *The word was made flesh; The seed of David according to the flesh; Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came; Christ is come in the flesh*, &c.

I shall now conclude the discourse with the following

## REMARKS.

1st. *This doctrine teaches us, in the strongest manner, the condescension of Christ.*

* Rev. x. 13

In this light it is considered by *St. Paul* in that memorable passage, Phil. ii. 5, &c. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*

No subject presents to us so wonderful an example of condescension, as the incarnation of Christ: Nor could any fact fill our minds with the same astonishment, were it not, that we have been accustomed to hear it repeated from the cradle, and, like the state of the weather, rendered an object of perpetual familiarity; a thing, almost of course, in the ordinary current of our thoughts; by unceasing inculcation.

From these causes, we pass it without serious attention, and, even when we dwell upon it, scarcely realize its nature. The impressions, which it makes on the mind, resemble those, made on the eye of such, as have been long accustomed to them, by a delightful landscape, a stupendous cataract, or a mountain, which loses its summit in the clouds. At the view of these, a stranger is fixed in exquisite delight; and has all his thoughts engrossed, and his emotions absorbed, by the wonderful scene. No language will in his view serve to describe, and no picture to image, on the one hand the beauty, or on the other the sublimity, of these illustrious objects. To do them justice in his representations, and to spread fairly before others the views, formed of them by his own mind, he will labour in thought, select and refuse, alternately, the language which offers itself, and will at last sit down, discouraged, without a hope of being able to render his conceptions visible to other eyes, or to do any thing like justice to what was so magnificent in the view of his own. Those, in the mean time, who have long lived in the neighbourhood of the same objects, will, in many, though not indeed in all instances, survey them without emotion, and even without attention; apparently as insensible to the beauty and grandeur, as the horses which they ride, or the oxen which they drive.

Such seem, but too commonly, to be the views, formed by most men concerning the incarnation of Christ; and such the insensibility, with which it is but too generally regarded. Even Christians, like their predecessors, mentioned in the Gospel, are, in innumerable instances, *fools* in this respect, *and slow of heart to believe*, or even to realize.

But let us, for a moment at least, lay aside these obtuse views, these *eyes* which *are dull of seeing*, these *hearts* too *gross to understand.* Let us shake off the torpor which benumbs our frame, and rouse ourselves to perception and feeling. Let us regard this wonderful subject with common justice, and common candour.

The glorious Person, who in the Scriptures is designated by the appellation, Ὁ Λογος τȣ Θεȣ, or the Word of God, *In the beginning created the heavens and the earth;* and said, *Let there be light, and there was light; Let there be a firmament. and there was a firma-*

*ment.* His hand also lighted up the flame of the sun, and kindled the stars. He *upholds* the Universe *by the word of his power;* and preserves order and regularity throughout all the parts of this amazing system.

In the Heavens he shines with inexpressible splendour. On the earth he lives, and works, provides and sustains, and satisfies the wants of every living thing. Throughout immensity, He quickens into life, action, and enjoyment, the innumerable multitudes of Intelligent beings. The universe, which he made, he also governs. The worlds, of which it is composed, he rolls through the infinite expanse with an Almighty and unwearied hand; and preserves them in their respective places and motions with unerring harmony. From the vast storehouse of his bounty he feeds and clothes the endless millions whom his hand has made; and from the riches of his own unchangeable Mind informs the innumerable host of Intelligent creatures with ever-improving virtue, dignity, and glory. To all these he allots the respective parts, which they are qualified to act in the boundless system of good, which his wisdom contrived, and his power has begun to execute; furnishes them with the means of being useful in his eternal kingdom; and thus prepares them to be amiable and excellent in his sight, and instruments of perpetually increasing good to each other.

At the head of this great kingdom he *sits upon a throne high and lifted up, far exalted above all heavens;* surveys with an intuitive view, and with divine complacency, the amazing work which his voice has called into being; and beholds it increasing without intermission in happiness, wisdom, and virtue, and advancing, with a regular progress, towards consummate glory and perfection.

Although *he is not worshipped as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things;* Yet before him Angels bow and veil their faces. *The four Living ones rest not day nor night, crying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, and who art, and who art to come.* And the whole multitude of the heavenly host, *the number of whom is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,* unite in the everlasting song, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

From this stupendous height of greatness and enjoyment, this Divine Person, passing all the bounds between God and Man, between the Infinite Mind and lifeless matter, united himself to *man who is but a worm;* assumed to himself a human soul, and a human body; and in a manner, incomprehensible by us, and not improbably by all other creatures, became thenceforth *God-Man,* inseparably united in one most wonderful and mysterious Person.

Of this singular act the *end* was not less glorious, than the *act* itself was amazing. It was to save a race of rebellious creatures,

whom he needed not, from misery and ruin; of creatures, whom with a word he could have returned to their original nothing, and whose places with another word he could have filled with equal or greater numbers, at his pleasure; all obedient, faithful, and happy. I shall not, however, dwell on this subject at the present time. Occasions still more appropriate will hereafter bring it up to view. The single point on which I would now insist, is the infinite condescension of Christ. This glorious person *humbled himself, to behold the things which are done under the sun.*

How much more when he came from his *high and holy place* to dwell beneath that sun, and take up his residence on his foot-stool! All this, however, he was pleased to do. *He emptied himself, took upon himself the form of a servant, and was born in the likeness of men.*

What were the views which Angels formed of this new and astonishing event? Easily may we imagine, that all heaven was lost in wonder, and buried in silence, to behold this transition from infinite glory to supreme humiliation, from the throne of the universe to a tenement of clay. How instinctively ought we, uniting with Angels in the same views and the same emotions, to behold, wonder, and adore!

2dly. *What a pattern of condescension is here set before us for our imitation! St. Paul* makes this practical use of the doctrine under consideration: *Let the same mind be in you*, says he to the Philippians, *which was also in Christ.*

Condescension is here enforced on the race of man with an authority, and example, literally infinite. The Divine Wisdom dictated the condescension of Christ; and the Divine Goodness carried it into execution. In it we see the manner, in which the Infinite Mind is pleased to act; and which boundless Excellence approves, and loves. This, then, is a character and conduct, to which we are urged by the highest of all considerations, the approbation, and example of God. Would we, then, be like God; would we be *perfect as He is perfect;* would we obtain his approbation; would we inherit the blessings, which he confers on those who are approved by him; would we become really excellent and lovely; we shall *give all diligence*, that *the same mind may be in us, which was also in Christ.* We shall *condescend to men of low degree;* be *meek and lowly of heart;* be satisfied with humble stations, offices, and employments; and feel, that no human interest is beneath our notice, and no human business unfit for us to perform, when we are called to perform it, and when others by the performance can be relieved, disposed to virtue, or made happy.

But how different is the usual conduct, and the prevailing character of Man! All men sigh to be rich; and none are contented with humble circumstances. All men pant to be great; and none are satisfied with a lowly condition. The rich despise the poor;

the great trample on the small. When we become rich, we sigh for additional riches. When we become great, we toil, and watch, and weary ourselves through life, to become greater. All, beneath us in these mere accidents, we overlook, contemn, insult, and style the dirt and scum of the earth.

Christ, on the contrary, became, voluntarily, not only a man, but a poor man; a lowly man; the son of a carpenter; humble in his station; without place, or power, or wealth; and perfectly satisfied to be without them all. His friends, his disciples, his Apostles, were selected from the poor and lowly; and he alleged it as one unanswerable proof of his Messiahship, that by him *the poor had the Gospel preached unto them.* This was the character of Him, whom Angels worship, and whom the Universe obeys.

Christ descended to these lowly men, and to these humble circumstances, from the throne of the heavens. Shall not we, then, be willing to let ourselves down from the side, or even the summit, of our mole-hill, to visit our fellow-emmets at the bottom? How small the descent at the utmost! How silly, how base, how contradictory to common sense, the pride, which refuses to make it!

Often, very often, the men, whom we despise as greatly beneath us, are better, wiser, and more excellent in the sight of God, than ourselves. Always we are odious to him, and contemptible in the eye of Reason, for this very pride. Let every proud man, then, feel, that for this very character, which he so fondly cherishes, he is hateful in the sight of God, and justly contemptible in that of men; that the character, which he despises, is the very character in which Christ chose to appear; and that the men, whom he treats with abuse and insolence, are of that very class, out of which Christ selected his friends and Apostles.

# SERMON XLIII.

COVENANT OF REDEMPTION.

ISAIAH liii. 10—12.—*When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

"*If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days; and the gracious purpose of* JEHOVAH *shall prosper in his hands. Of the travail of his soul he shall see (the fruit) and be satisfied: by the knowledge of him shall my Servant justify many; for the punishment of their iniquities he shall bear. Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil: because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many; and made intercession for the transgressors.*"

LOWTH.

IN the first chapter of the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, *St. Paul* declares, that *God hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world; having predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself; according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.*

The manner, in which this transaction took place, and in which the purposes of it were accomplished, is recorded in the text. The Person, who speaks in the text, is unquestionably GOD the Father; as is evident from the fact, that he calls Christ in the 11th verse *my Servant*. The Context, as you well know, is an eminent and remarkable prophecy concerning the birth, life, and sufferings of Christ; and has been acknowledged as such, so far as my information extends, by both the *Jewish* and *Christian* churches universally, in every age, since it was written. Almost the whole of it is occupied by an account of his humiliation and sufferings, described with such a degree of minuteness, and exactness, as to wear the appearance rather of a history, than of a prophecy.

In the text, a covenant is made, on the part of the Speaker, with the Person of whom he speaks; or, on the part of GOD the Father, with the Son. In the tenth verse, the first of the text, it is proposed, conditionally, in the following terms: *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall*

*prolong his days ; and the pleasure of the* LORD *shall prosper in his hand.* In the translation of Bishop *Lowth*, which differs from the common one only by being more correct and explicit, it is, "*If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see a seed which shall prolong their days ; and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands.*" The difference lies, principally, in the second clause, "He shall see *a* seed, which shall prolong *their* days." It could not, I think, with propriety be promised, as a reward to Christ for his sufferings, that, in any sense, *he should prolong his* own *days ;* but with the most perfect propriety, that *he should see a seed, which*, in a sense hereafter to be explained, *should prolong* THEIR *days.* The days of Him, who *is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending*, could not in any sense be prolonged in consequence of his sufferings, or of any other possible event. The word *his*, supplied by the Translators, is supplied erroneously: since in the present translation it presents a meaning, which plainly cannot be admitted. The justice of these remarks will be further evident from the repetition of the same covenant in the eleventh verse. *He shall see of the travail of his Soul ;* that is, as explained by *Lowth*, "*Of the travail of his Soul he shall see the fruit and be satisfied ;*" *By his knowledge*, or as *Lowth* more correctly renders it, "*By the knowledge of him, shall my Servant justify many.*" *The justification of the many*, here spoken of, *connected with its consequences*, is the very reward, promised in the preceding verse, in the words, *He shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days :* and here the reward, promised, is no other, than *the justification and consequent eternal life of those, who should become interested in his death.*

Still further is this interpretation evinced to be just by the repetition of the promise in the twelfth verse; or third of the text; *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong ; because he hath poured out his soul unto death ;* or, as more happily rendered by Bishop *Lowth*, *Therefore I will distribute to him the many for his portion ; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil, because he poured out his soul unto death.* It is not true, that Christ has a portion divided to him with the great, or a spoil divided to him with the strong. *He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with him.* Nor is there any one to share with him the reward of his sufferings; but he was alone in the sufferings, and the reward, alike. Accordingly, in the Septuagint this passage is rendered, "*For this cause shall he receive many for his inheritance, and shall share spoils of the strong.*"

Finally, the same thing is abundantly evinced in Psalm lxxxix; where, also, the same covenant is recorded. *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.* And again, *His*

*seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of Heaven.* It is to be observed, that in all these passages *the reward, promised, to Christ, consists in giving persons to him; as seed; the many; the mighty people.* These are undoubtedly no other than *the general assembly and church of the first born;* styled elsewhere *the children of* GOD; *little children; sons and daughters.* They are his own people; those, in whom he has a peculiar property; persons justified, who in this manner have become *his portion; his spoil; his seed.* The reward of his sufferings, here promised, is to consist of these.

It is not however, to consist in the *persons* only, but in their *circumstances* also. It is not promised, merely, that they shall be given to him as a possession, but that they shall be given to him in a peculiar manner; attended with one circumstance, at least, which in the eye of the Promiser was considered, as materially important to the nature of the gift. *He shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days;* or, as in the corresponding passage, *shall endure for ever.* The meaning of this phraseology is to be sought in the use of it, in parallel passages, found in the Scriptures. In the 15th *Psalm*, *David* inquires, LORD, *who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* and immediately answers, *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness.* In the 49th *Psalm* and 12th *verse*, he says of the wicked, *That, being in honour, they abide not, but are like the beasts that perish.* In the 125th *Psalm* and 1st *verse*, he says, *They that trust in the* LORD *shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.* In *John* 10th and 15th, our Saviour saith to his disciples, *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* In 1st of *John* 2d and 17th, it is said, *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of* GOD *abideth for ever.* In *Psalm* 102d and 28th, it is said, *The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.*

We are now prepared to settle the meaning of the phrase under consideration. *To prolong their days, To endure for ever,* is to *abide in the tabernacle of* GOD, *in his holy hill, in the heavens; to abide in the love of Christ, as he abides in his Father's love, for ever: to abide, when the World has passed away,* and *the lust thereof: to be established before* GOD, *or in his presence.* In a word, it is *to dwell for ever in heaven, amid the enjoyments of a happy immortality.* This is what the Scriptures consider as *abiding, enduring, and being established;* whenever this language is applied to men. In opposition to this, *the wicked* are said *to be cut off, and to perish; to be as the grass, to be destroyed, to be no more;* and *their candle* is said *to go out.* This part of the promise, then, is no other, than *that the seed of Christ shall enjoy a blessed eternity.*

In the passages, quoted from the 89th Psalm, an additional promise is made in the same covenant. It is there said, *that his*

*seed shall endure for ever, and his throne*, that is, his dominion over *them* particularly, *as the days of heaven*. The same thing is also covenanted, in different phraseology, in Isaiah ix. 6th and 7th, *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty* GOD, *the Father of the everlasting age*, and *the Prince of Peace. And of the increase of his government, and peace, there shall be no end.* Here we are taught, that, *of the increase of the government of Christ*, that is, of its splendour and glory, *and of the peace*, or prosperity, of his subjects, accomplished by it, *there shall be no end:* in other words, *that the glory of his government, and the happiness of his church, shall increase for ever.*

The condition, on his part, to which these rewards are promised, is that *he shall make his soul an offering for sin; or a propitiatory sacrifice.* Another condition is also specified, as the procuring cause of the reward, *in the last verse*: and therefore was undoubtedly included, although not expressed, in the two former verses. This is, that *he made intercession for the transgressors.*

In this passage, then, we have the substance of the *Mediation of Christ*, drawn out in the essential particulars: *his humiliation, atonement, and intercession. The reward* also, that is, the great object, which was his inducement to undertake this Mediation, is distinctly expressed: viz. that *he should see a seed, which should prolong their days*, and that *the gracious purpose of* JEHOVAH *should prosper in his hands.* This in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is *by St. Paul* styled *the joy, set before him;* that is, set before him in this promise, or covenant; for which, he informs us, *Christ endured the cross, and despised the shame.*

In the text, also, we are taught *the means, by which, on their part, mankind become his seed*, expressed in the following declaration: *By the knowledge of him shall my Servant justify many.* By the knowledge of Christ here, we are unquestionably to understand *that knowledge of* GOD the Father, *and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*, which in John 17th and 3d he declares to be *life eternal;* and which in the 8th verse he speaks of as being the same with evangelical faith. *They have known surely, that I have come out from thee; and they have believed, that thou didst send me.* By this faith, as you well know, we are abundantly declared in the Scriptures, to be justified. The declaration of *Paul* to *Peter*, when, at Antioch, *he separated himself from the Gentiles, through fear of them that were of the circumcision, and was* therefore *to be blamed*, may stand in the place of all other passages on this point, *We, who are Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even* WE, *have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law: for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. The faith of the*

*Gospel is, therefore, the knowledge, by which, it is said in* the text, *Christ shall justify many.* The reason why it is called *knowledge* here, and elsewhere, is, that it involves views so just, extensive, and firmly established concerning this glorious Person: Whereas, in the same mind no such views existed, antecedently to the exercise of this faith. For Christ, like every other spiritual object, can only *be spiritually discerned.*

All these things, also, are exhibited to us *in the form of a covenant.* To this covenant, as to every other, there are two parties: GOD, who promises, and his Servant, who was to justify many. A condition is specified, to which is annexed a promise of reward. The condition is, that *Christ should make his soul an offering for sin, and make intercession for the transgressors;* or, in other words, execute the whole office of a Priest for mankind. The reward is, that *he should receive the many for his portion, and that they should prolong their days, or endure for ever.* It is remarkable, that this covenant, on the part of GOD the Father, like that made with *Noah*, and that made with *Abraham*, and various others recorded in the Scriptures, is in the 89th Psalm exhibited, as *a promissory oath: Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David; His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as long as the Sun.*

I have dwelt minutely on the explanation of this passage of Scripture, because I have not seen it discussed in this manner; or with a reference to what is the main subject of it; and because I believed, that a minute examination was necessary to a distinct and satisfactory knowledge of what is contained in it.

If this explanation be admitted, the text contains the following doctrine. *That* GOD *the Father entered into a Covenant with Christ, in which he promised him, on condition that he should become a Propitiation, and Intercessor, for sinners, as a reward of his labours and suffering, the future possession of a Church, which under his government should be glorious and happy for ever.*

Concerning this Covenant, usually called *the Covenant of Redemption*, I make the following observations.

1st. *This Covenant was made from Eternity.*

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, *St. Paul*, speaking of himself and his fellow-christians, says, *Blessed be the* GOD *and Father of our* LORD *Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in,* or *through Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* In this passage *St. Paul* teaches us, that GOD blesses his Church, or Christians, with all spiritual blessings; or, as in the Original, *with every spiritual blessing; through Christ*, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world: and that he

has predestinated us, particularly, unto the adoption of children unto himself, through Christ also. This choice of his church, then, this predestination of it to the adoption of children through Christ, existed before the foundation of the world. But this choice, this predestination of the church to the adoption of children unto himself, through Christ, is the very same thing which, in another form, is declared in the text. The covenant, mentioned in the text, was therefore a transaction, existing before the foundation of the world; or, as this phraseology uniformly means in the Scriptures, from Eternity.

The text itself was written seven hundred years before Christ. It will not be supposed, that the transaction recorded in it, was then first admitted into the counsels of GOD; or that he, *with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning*, changed his mind in the days of *Isaiah* concerning this mighty object. If any person should be at a loss concerning this fact, let him remember, that this covenant contains the very same promises, which were made to *David*, *Abraham*, and our first parents; to all of whom the same wonderful transaction was, in terms less explicit, disclosed. The transaction itself, and the objects which it involved, were unquestionably the most important parts of the providence of GOD towards this world. It cannot, therefore, be believed, that it was left unprovided for, when the system was originally formed. Undoubtedly it was the object, which was chiefly in view, in the providence of GOD, and was an original part of the system. Accordingly, *St. Peter* says, concerning Christ, that *he was foreordained before the foundation of the world;* and *St. John* calls him *the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world;* and Christ himself, at the day of Judgment, styles the state of glory and happiness, destined for the righteous, *the kingdom, prepared from the foundation of the world. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* But this kingdom, and the Church, which inherits it, is the very subject of the covenant, contained in the text.

2dly. *This covenant was the basis, on which was founded the whole system of providential dispensations towards the Church.*

Out of this covenant arose the Mediation of Christ; his incarnation, life, preaching, miracles, humiliation, sufferings, and glorification. Out of this covenant arose the Mission of the Spirit of Grace; who came into the world, to execute the purposes of Christ's redemption. Out of this covenant arose the Gospel; or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which that Spirit taught to the Prophets and Apostles, and which communicates to us all the knowledge, which we possess, of the will of GOD, concerning the salvation of mankind. Out of this covenant arise the renovation and purification of the human soul; the light, comfort, peace, hope, and joy, which it receives in the present world; and, in the end, its admission into the heavens. Finally, out of this

covenant will arise the glory, peace, and happiness, which will be found in that pure and exalted world by the whole *assembly of the first born.* All these, and all things pertaining to them, result, obviously, from the wonderful transaction, recorded in the text.

3dly. *The Church, thus promised to Christ, as the reward of his mediation, is formed of a great multitude of mankind.*

It will not be necessary for me to inquire, at the present time, either in what manner this multitude will be gathered, or of whom it will be composed. It is sufficient for the present purpose, that the assertion, which I have made, is expressly contained in the text. *By the knowledge of him shall my Servant justify Many. I will distribute the Many to him for his portion, and the Mighty people*, that is, a great multitude, *shall he share for his spoil.* Accordingly, *St. John* informs us, that he saw in the heavens *a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; crying with a loud voice, and saying, Salvation to our* GOD, *who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

4thly. *In this covenant a reward was promised to Christ, sufficiently great to induce him to undergo all the humiliation and sufferings of his Mediatorial character.*

This we know by the fact. In accordance with this covenant he actually assumed this character, and voluntarily underwent all *its sufferings.* But, were we at a loss concerning this subject otherwise; we are directly assured by St. Paul, that Christ, *for the joy, set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.* What the *joy* of Christ was, he himself has, I apprehend, expressly declared to us in the 8th chapter of Proverbs. His words are. *When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then was I by him, as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men:* that is, with his Church; the glorious reward, which was promised to him from the beginning.

From these summary observations, concerning the Covenant of Redemption, I derive, by way of inference, the following

## REMARKS.

In the 1st place, *The salvation of the Church of* GOD, that is, *of all righteous men, was an original part of the system of* GOD'S *providence towards the inhabitants of this world.*

If the observations, made in the progress of this discourse, are just; then it follows by irresistible consequence, that the salvation of the righteous, or of all who will be ultimately saved, was contemplated, and resolved on, by GOD, from the beginning, or from everlasting. It was. also, made the subject of a solemn Covenant

between the Father and the Son. It was not, therefore, in any sense a thing, which grew out of a *contingency;* according to the scheme of *Dr. Price* and others; a remedy, *provided for evils unforeseen;* a thing, grafted upon the fall of man, which they consider as an accident, springing out of that liberty of contingency, which they suppose indispensable to the free volitions of a moral being. St. Paul teaches us that God, the Father, *created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent, that now unto principalities, and powers, in heavenly places might be known* by *the Church, the manifold wisdom of God: According to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Here it is declared to be a part of the *eternal purpose of God in Jesus Christ,* to *create all things by him, to the intent that principalities and powers might know, by* means of *the Church,* that is, by means of his dispensations to the church, *the manifold wisdom of God.* Of course, *the existence of the Church* was an essential part of his eternal purpose. Of course, also, the existence of the church was foreknown, and resolved on, as a part of this purpose. Its existence, therefore, was in no sense contingent; in no sense accidental; in no sense dependent on any thing, by which it could be prevented. In accordance with this declaration, *St. Paul* says, 2 Tim. i. 9, *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and grace, which was given us, before the world began.* In this passage Christians are said to be *saved according to the purpose and grace of God, given to them,* in the strong figurative language of the Apostle, *before the world began;* that is, in simpler language, resolved on, established for them, given in the counsels of God; so as to be indefeasible by any subsequent event. Thus is this passage explained in the corresponding one of Titus 1st and 2d, *In the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.* Here the grace and salvation, said in the passage, last quoted, to be given, is called *eternal life,* and is declared to *be* PROMISED *before the world began.* The existence of the Church, the eternal life of its members, and the grace by which that life is attained, were all *promised before the world began:* promised, I apprehend, in the Covenant which we have been contemplating; and plainly an essential part of the providential system, relating immediately to the inhabitants of this world.

2dly. *The salvation of the righteous is Certain.*

If the salvation of the righteous was an original, and essential part of the providential system; if it was contemplated, purposed, and resolved on; if it was promised to Christ, as the reward of his labours and sufferings; if it was the condition on the part of the Father in a covenant with the Son; then it is perfectly evident, that it cannot fail; but will certainly be accomplished. The language of God on this subject is, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*

As the salvation of the church is thus certain; the salvation of every righteous man is for the same reason equally certain. Every righteous man is a part of the church; one of *the Many*, thus promised to Christ in the covenant of Redemption, and assured of the certain attainment of eternal life by the unchangeable promise of GOD. Let no such man indulge a moment's apprehension, that he shall be forgotten of GOD, either in this life, or in death, or at the resurrection, or at the judgment, or at the final entrance of the Church into Heaven. He, who has given *a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple;* he, who has consecrated *two mites* to the service of GOD; he, who has willingly befriended *the least of Christ's brethren*, is absolutely certain of his reward.

3dly. *We are taught by this doctrine, that the Mediation of Christ furnishes a complete foundation for our acceptance with* GOD.

The Mediation of Christ was the condition of our acceptance, which GOD himself proposed, and proceeding from his own good pleasure. It was, therefore, originally, and absolutely, pleasing to him. He is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* It will, of course, be alway, and equally, pleasing. We are not, therefore, left to the necessity of debating, or even inquiring, whether the satisfaction of Christ is sufficient for all men, that is, whether there is a quantum of merit, mathematically estimated; on which every man may rely, because it is so great, as to rise to any definite, or supposed limit. Independently of all discussions of this nature, every man is assured, that, if he is interested in this covenant by becoming one of *the seed*, or followers, of Christ, by possessing that *knowledge*, or *faith*, which is the condition of justification; he will certainly, also, be accepted of GOD; as being one of those, whom this promise included.

The number, and the greatness, of the sins, committed by any man, and the degree of guilt, which he has accumulated, however discouraging, or overwhelming, it may prove in the hour of deep contrition, ought in no wise to persuade the penitent to doubt, even for a moment, of the sufficiency of Christ as an expiation for him. One sin, only, is mentioned in the Scriptures, as admitting of no atonement: viz. *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.* Others are indeed exhibited as peculiarly dangerous; because, acquiring peculiar strength by habit, they conduct men, with few exceptions, to final impenitence and immoveable hardness of heart. But none of these is declared to be in itself, beyond the reach of forgiveness. For the sin against the Holy Ghost, repentance never existed. He therefore, who has good reason to believe, that he is the subject of faith in the Redeemer, and repentance towards GOD, has equal reason to believe, that his sins are blotted out, and his soul accepted, through the atonement of Christ; sufficient for him, and for all others who are like him.

With the same confidence may the anxious, trembling sinner rely on the same righteousness as the ground of his own future ac-

ceptance with GOD. The language of GOD on this subject is, *Him that cometh unto me*, that is, in this manner, *will I in no wise cast out.* The sole concern of every sinner ought, therefore, to be the attainment of this evangelical character; the very thing, which is intended by coming to GOD; and not curious inquiries, nor anxious doubts, concerning a point, so easily settled in this manner, and so clearly decided by the Scriptures.

4thly. *The salvation of the Church is here shown to be an object of inestimable greatness and importance.*

It has, I trust, been proved, that this event was a primary part of the providential system of God towards mankind, and the subject of a solemn covenant between the Father and the Son in the ages of Eternity. For the accomplishment of it, as one primary object, this world was created; and a mysterious and most wonderful system of Providence carried into execution. For the accomplishment of it the Son of God condescended to be born, to lead a life of humiliation and suffering, to die on the cross, and to be buried in the tomb. For the accomplishment of it he rose again from the dead on the third day; ascended into Heaven; *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;* and makes an unceasing and effectual intercession. For the same end the Spirit of Truth came into the world on a divine and benevolent mission; and here renews and purifies the souls of men, and conducts them to the heavenly world. For the same end the world itself will be consumed with fire; the visible *heavens pass away with a great noise; they that are in the graves hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth;* the *judgment* be *set;* angels and men be tried, and sentenced to their respective rewards; *new heavens and a new earth be created, wherein righteousness shall dwell for ever: while, at the same time, the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

Each of these things declares in a forcible manner the importance of this mighty object in the sight of God. In his providence the Means are never greater, more numerous, or more splendid, than the nature of the End will amply justify. The means, which I have recited, are the most magnificent and awful events, of which we have any knowledge. The greatness of the end is proportional. Accordingly, St. Paul in a most sublime exhibition of this subject, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, declares, that *the earnest expectation of the Creature* (in the Greek, *Creation*) *waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God:* and that *the whole Creation groaneth, and travaileth together in pain*, with this divine and most wonderful birth.

If, then, the salvation of the Church holds this high place in the divine estimation; it ought unquestionably to hold the same place in ours. By each of us it ought to be regarded as an event of incomprehensible magnitude, of transcendent glory, and of an im-

portance, sufficient to reward, with propriety, the labours and sufferings of the Son of God.

Of proportional importance is the salvation of each of the Individuals, of which this assembly of the righteous is composed. Lord *Shaftesbury* has decided, that no conduct, in which future good to one's self is the motive of action, can be virtuous. Proofs of the soundness of this decision his Lordship has not however furnished, and plainly was not able to furnish: for it is a decision, contradicting alike the voice of common sense, and the voice of GOD. GOD by commanding us to *flee from the wrath to come*, and to *lay hold on eternal life*, has assured us of the rectitude of this conduct. In the observations, contained in this discourse, we have seen ample reason for this command; and ample proof of the rectitude of the conduct, which it requires. If the salvation of the Church was so great and glorious a thing in the sight of GOD; the salvation of each individual, which it contains, is proportionally important: a thing in itself great and good; incomprehensibly great and good; deserving our supreme attention, most anxious labours, and most fervent prayers. The attainment of it, in every instance, is pleasing to our Creator; makes man lovely in his sight; and diffuses a peculiar joy over that happy world, where all the virtuous are assembled together. Let every one of us, therefore, *with all humility of mind, with strong crying, and many tears*, begin, and carry on, this prime business of life, unseduced by sophistry, unwarped by temptation, unbroken by discouragement; and *by a patient continuance in* all *well-doing*, *seek* so faithfully *for glory, honour, and immortality*, as to obtain in the end *everlasting life*.

# SERMON XLIV.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—HIS PERSONAL PREACHING.

LUKE xxiv. 19.—*And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet, mighty in deed and word, before God, and all the people.*

IN the preceding discourse I considered, at some length, *the Covenant of Redemption.* In the terms of this covenant, I observed, was contained *the substance of Christ's employment*, as the Mediator between God and man, and the *reward*, which He was to receive in this character. By the substance of his employment, I intend *the things, which he did, and suffered, alike*, while in the execution of the Mediatorial office. These things naturally follow the covenant of Redemption, in a system of Theology, and therefore, naturally demand our next examination.

In the Scriptures, Christ is frequently spoken of, as *the Prophet, Priest, and King, of mankind.* This distribution of his Mediatorial character into three great and distinguishing parts is, undoubtedly, the most proper, which can be made; and is amply authorized by the Spirit of God: it will, therefore, be followed in these discourses.

The first, and at the same time the most remarkable, designation of the Redeemer, as a Prophet, is found in the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy. In the 15th verse, Moses says to the Israelites: *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.* This promise, we learn from the verses immediately following, was given to the *Israelites*, in answer to their petition, at the foot of Mount *Horeb: Let us not hear again the voice of the Lord, our God; neither let us see this great fire any more; that we die not.* In answer to this petition, *the Lord said unto Moses: They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*

In this very remarkable prediction we are taught,

1st. That a Prophet *should, at some subsequent period, be raised up, in the Jewish Church; and of that nation; who should be like unto Moses;* that is, *one who, like Moses, introduced a new dispensation, to stand in the place of the Mosaic; as that, at the time of this prophecy, was introduced into the place of the Patriarchal Dispensation.* In the last chapter of Deuteronomy written, not improbably, by several hands, and closed, perhaps, by *Ezra*, it is

said: *There arose not a Prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses.* If this was really written by *Ezra*, it is a direct testimony, that the Prophet, marked out in this prediction, did not arise until after the captivity. In John i. 19—21, we are informed, that the *Jews*, to wit, the *Sanhedrim*, to whom belonged the right of inquiring into the authority and commissions of Prophets, sent a solemn delegation to John the Baptist, to demand of him an account of his character. They first asked him, particularly, *Art thou Elias?* and, upon his answering in the negative, asked him again, *Art thou that Prophet?*—ὁ προφητης: THE *Prophet by way of eminence.* In John vi. 14, the five thousand *Jews*, whom Christ fed with five loaves and two fishes, under the strong impression of that wonderful miracle said concerning Christ, *This is of a truth that Prophet, that should come into the world.* In John vii. 40, we are told, that the multitude of the Jews in the temple, after hearing the discourses of Christ, recorded in this chapter, said, *Of a truth, this is* THE *Prophet.*

The first of these passages assures us, that in the judgment of the *Sanhedrim*, the Prophet, foretold by *Moses*, who was to be *like unto him*, had not arisen, when John the Baptist began to preach: and the two last assure us of the same fact, according to the judgment of the People at large. Of course, it is fairly presumed to have been the belief of every preceding age. The two last passages also teach us, that Christ appeared in a character so like that of the expected Prophet, as to be repeatedly acknowledged in this character by the Jewish people.

2dly. *This Prophet was to appear with a divine commission, as an inspired teacher from* GOD. *I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him.*

3dly. *His appearance was to be such, as not to alarm, or terrify, the People of the Jews.*

This is evident from the fact, that he was promised in answer to a petition of that people, in which they requested, that they might no more hear the awful voice of GOD, nor see the fire, by which Mount Sinai was surrounded. GOD, approving of the request, answers, that he will raise them up a Prophet from the midst of them, One, who should be of their brethren; One, of course, who was to be like themselves; a man, conversing with them, as friend with friend, who should *not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets;** *but who should be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to preach good tidings to the meek; and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,*† with the *still, small voice* of wisdom, truth, and righteousness.

From these things it is evident, that no other prophet sustained all these characteristics, but Christ; even his *enemies themselves being the judges.* That Christ sustained them all is unanswerably

* Isaiah xlii. 2 † Isaiah lxi. 1, 2

certain; particularly, that he wrought *mighty signs, and wonders*, and that *he was known of God face to face.* St. *Peter* in his sermon to the *Jews*, Acts iii. has, by directly applying this prophecy to Christ, assured us, that he was the prophet intended; and, therefore, precluded the necessity of any further inquiry.

In the text, the same character is attributed to him by *Cleophas:* as he himself decisively informs us, by adding in a following verse, *We trusted, that it had been he, who should have redeemed Israel.* At the same time, the text furnishes us with a summary account of the manner, in which the Redeemer discharged his prophetical office, by declaring, that he was *a prophet mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people.* To discuss this subject, is the design of the following discourse.

Prophecy may naturally be divided into two parts: *The communication of the will of God to mankind, concerning their duty and salvation; and the prediction of future events.*

The power, by which both these were done, was no other than Inspiration: for Man is as unable to divine the will of God, as to foresee future events. Both these parts of the prophetical character, Christ sustained in the most perfect degree: But the revelation of the will of God to mankind, the original, and far the most important, part of the business of a Prophet, and that which is alike pointed out in the text, and in the prediction of *Moses*, is the characteristic of the Redeemer, especially intended to be, at this time, the subject of consideration.

In *Newton's* dissertations on the prophecies may be found an ample illustration of the nature, and extent, of Christ's predictions.

The *prophetical Instruction, or preaching, of Christ*, is in the Scriptures distributed into *that, which he communicated in his own person: and that, which he communicated by his Apostles.* The former of these shall be first considered.

In an examination of the Personal Preaching of Christ, the following things demand our attention:

I. *The Necessity of his executing the office of a preacher.*

II. *The things which he taught.*

III. *The Manner, in which he taught:* and,

IV. *The Consequence of his Preaching.*

I. *I shall consider the necessity of Christ's assuming the office of a Preacher.*

It is obvious to every man, that Christ might have appeared in the world in the humble character, in which he actually appeared; have wrought the miracles, recorded of him; suffered the death of the cross; and generally, have done every thing recorded of him, either as an act or a suffering; and then, instead of teaching mankind the way of life and salvation with his own mouth, might have taught it to his Apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and commissioned *them* to publish it to mankind.

This course, however, he did not pursue. On the contrary,

he has chosen to teach it extensively in his own person. For this conduct of his there were, doubtless, very substantial reasons. Some of them were probably withholden from mankind. Others are discernible with sufficient clearness. Even these are not, indeed, very often called up to view; and by most men are probably unknown and unthought of. Yet, so far as they can be known, they are capable of being highly useful, and means of no small satisfaction to a serious mind. Among them the following may, I think, be mentioned, as possessing a real, and sufficiently obvious, importance.

I. *Christ may be fairly believed to have assumed the office of a Preacher;* (or that branch of the prophetical office, which I have specified as the subject of discourse) *that the Gospel might appear plainly, and undeniably, to be His.*

Christ is, and from everlasting was designed to be, the great, and visible, agent in all things, pertaining to the present world. In Col. i. 14, &c. we have the following account of his character: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Who is the image of the invisible God; the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things; and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* In this passage Christ is declared to be the Image, or manifest Representative of the invisible GOD; the First-born, or Head, of the whole creation; the Creator of all things, existing before all things; the Upholder of all things; and the First-born from the dead; a character, which he is said to hold, *that in all things he might have the pre-eminence:* because, as the Apostle adds, *It was well-pleasing* to the* FATHER *that in him all fulness should dwell.* Now it is evident, that it was a necessary, as well as proper, part of this great design, not only that he should be the Author of the Gospel; but that this fact should be completely proved, and perfectly known. The publication of the Gospel to mankind is evidently one of the chief dispensations of divine providence in the present world. As, therefore, it was the *good pleasure of the Father that in all things he should have the pre-eminence;* so it was peculiarly proper that he should be pre-eminent in a thing, so important, and glorious, as the publication of the Gospel.

*St. James*, in the 4th chapter and 10th verse of his Epistle, informs us, that in the Church of God *there is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy;* that is Christ. Christ, then, being

* ευδοκησε.

the only Lawgiver in his Church, it seems to be indispensable, that the Gospel, which contains his Laws, should be seen to be his; that all, who read it, may know his pleasure with certainty; and never be left to doubt whether any given doctrine, or precept, was given by him, or was derived from the comments of others. The difference between these two cases cannot, I suppose, need any explanation.

But if Christ, instead of preaching the Gospel in person, had left it to be published by the Apostles only; the question, *whether it was his Gospel*, would have instantly been raised up against its acceptance by mankind. Infidels would have boldly denied it to be his; and Christians would have been perplexed, not only concerning the proper answer to this denial, but also concerning their own Faith and Duty. Even now, Unitarians, as well as Infidels, hold out a distinction between *the Gospel;* that is, as they intend, the personal Instructions of Christ; and *the Epistles*, which they consider as the mere Comments of Christ's followers. Thus Lord *Bolingbroke* declares the system of religion, both Natural and Revealed, to be excellent, and plainly taught; as it was taught by Christ, and recorded by his Evangelists: "a complete system to all the purposes of Religion."* Nay, he speaks of it directly, as *revealed by God himself.* † "Christianity, genuine Christianity," he says again, "is contained in the Gospel, it is the Word of God." ‡ At the same time, Lord *Bolingbroke* declares, that St. *Paul* has preached another Gospel; and that the New Testament contains two Gospels. In the same manner Mr. *Chubb* declares, that St. *Paul* preached another Gospel, which was *contradictory to that of Christ.* *Unitarians*, also, are plainly unwilling to allow the same respect, and confidence, to be due to the Apostolic writings, which they appear to consider as due to the words of Christ; and, like the Infidels above mentioned, admit, that the Gospels possess a higher character than the Epistles.

To what a length this scheme of thought would have been carried, had Christ never preached at all, and how far the character of the New Testament, as an undoubted Revelation, would have been acknowledged, if the doctrines and precepts, which it contains, had been declared by the Apostles only, it is difficult to divine. From the nature of the subject, the facts just recited, and others like them, it may be easily believed, that the character of the New Testament as inspired, would have been seriously affected; and, with respect to multitudes who now admit it unconditionally, overthrown; and that the character of Christ, as the Lawgiver of the Church, would have been obscured. In some instances it would have been doubted, and in others denied; and his pre-eminence in this important particular would, to a great extent, have been unseen, and unregarded.

* Leland, Vol. 2, p. 163, 164. † p. 169. ‡ Ibid.

II. *It was necessary that Christ should preach the Gospel, that he might sanction its Doctrines, Precepts, and Ordinances, with his own authority.*

The Doctrines, Precepts, and Ordinances of the Gospel, are rules of the faith, practice, and worship, of all, to whom it is made known. Whenever a rule of this nature is published to any man, the great question, naturally asked by him, is always: "By what authority am I required to conform to this rule?" In matters of conscience, even an ignorant man knows, that no being, except GOD, has any right to prescribe to him rules of obedience. When GOD prescribes to him, the prescription is a law: When man prescribes to him, it is only advice. But between law and advice the difference, in this case, is infinite.

Christ, as has been remarked, is the only, and the rightful Lawgiver to his Church. Had he not declared the Gospel in his own person, the question, whether it was his Gospel, would have arisen, not only against its claims to be a Revelation, but also against its authority, and consequent obligation. The Authority of the Apostles, as men, is certainly less than that of Christ, as a man; for he was a wiser and better man than they.

According to every scheme of Christianity, even according to that of the Socinians, the authority of the Gospel terminates in Christ, as the original Publisher of it to mankind; and in this view is of more import, and higher obligation, than if it had terminated in the Apostles. The Apostles might, indeed, have been admitted as upright and unexceptionable witnesses of facts; and full credit might have been given to their testimony. But when they prescribed rules of faith and practice, their authority would easily have been questioned: for in this case they would have needed not only an unexceptionable character, but a divine commission. Had the Apostles told us, (as, if Christ had not personally preached the Gospel, they must have told us) only, that Christ was born, lived and died, at such a time, and in such a manner; it is not easy to conceive how they would have proved, satisfactorily to mankind, their reception of such a commission from him. The mind would instinctively, fondly, and anxiously, have asked, "whether this distinguished person did not, while in the world, teach those around him the superior wisdom, which he possessed. If he did not; why did he not? If he did; why were not his instructions recorded?"

The absolute want of an answer to these questions would, I think, have left this subject in a state of obscurity, not only distressing, but perplexing, and dangerous.

Of this obscurity, Infidels would not have failed to avail themselves; as they now do of every seeming difficulty, and disadvantage, under which they suppose Christianity to labour. They would have asked triumphantly, "how does it appear that these doctrines, precepts, or ordinances, are Christ's; and not merely

the dictates of his followers? In many instances we acknowledge them to be true doctrines, sound and useful precepts, and harmless ordinances; such as may be believed, and obeyed, reasonably enough; but where is the proof, that they were intended to be laws of faith and conduct, binding the consciences of men? If this had been their character, would not Christ, the source of this system, have declared it, during his residence on earth? The fact, that he did not, to say the least, renders the point doubtful; and, of course, releases mankind from any obligation to obey."

What Infidels would thus have boldly advanced, Socinians would probably have readily admitted; and multitudes of cold and timid believers would, as probably, have followed in their train. In this manner, the whole system might have assumed a new face, and the whole Church a different character.

All these things would, also, have required peculiar strength, and consistency, from the fact, that *the Apostles attribute the Gospel wholly to Christ; as being originally, and exclusively, his.* "Where," it would be asked, "is the proof of this great fact? No record is left of the Instructions of Christ himself, to indicate his pleasure. This certainly is strange; and, if it was really his will that we should obey these precepts and receive these doctrines, unaccountable. In a case of such importance, he cannot be believed to have left us in any doubt; much less in so serious a perplexity. His absolute silence, therefore, in a matter of this magnitude, furnishes no small reason to believe, that he intended and required, no conformity, or obedience, of this nature, on our part."

From these objections and others like them, the Church, and those, individually and successively, of whom in every period it was to be formed, would undoubtedly have experienced many difficulties and perplexities, in the way of their faith and obedience. Nor would the powerful arguments, derived from the lives, and the miracles, of the Apostles, be able to remove these difficulties. In spite of these arguments, difficulties even now exist, sufficiently perplexing to stumble the weak, and ensnare the unguarded. It is hardly necessary to add, that by the supposed silence of Christ all these would be mightily enhanced.

The Gospel is probably reverenced by those, who reverence it at all, in a degree, generally proportioned to their views concerning its Author. *Trinitarians* regard it with the highest veneration; *Arians* with a less degree; and *Socinians*, particularly the followers of Doctor *Priestly*, with the least. Even these, however, regard Christ with more respect, than they render to the Apostles. Had the Gospel been preached by the Apostles only, there is reason to fear that by every one of these classes of men, it would have been regarded with a still lower degree of veneration. To believe its doctrines, to obey its precepts, and to celebrate its ordinances, would have been felt to be a duty, less powerfully

incumbent on mankind, less obligatory, and less necessary to the attainment of salvation.

It ought here to be remarked, that the Scriptures themselves furnish a solid foundation for this distinction. St. Paul, Heb. ii. 1—3, says, *Therefore*, (that is, on account of the exalted Character of Christ, displayed in the preceding chapter) *we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For, if the word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him?* In the preceding chapter, the Apostle had proved the entire and infinite superiority of Christ to Angels. From this character of the Saviour he derives the inference, just read; viz. the utter hopelessness of escape to such, as neglect the salvation, which He published with his own mouth. The justice of the Inference he proves by the fact, that even those, who disobeyed the word spoken by Angels, were uniformly, and equitably punished. Those, therefore, he says, cannot possibly escape punishment, who neglect the word spoken by Christ, a person so much greater and better than Angels.

Again, Chap. x. 28, 29, He says, *He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?* In both these instances the Apostle evidently considers the guilt of disobeying Christ as greater than that of disobeying other publishers of the Word of God; and of course attributes to Christ, as a preacher of the Gospel, an authority, superior to that of any other person. These very passages, had they been written, as substantially they might have been, would perhaps have been quoted against the Apostles themselves, if Christ had not preached the Gospel in person.

III. *It was necessary that Christ should preach the Gospel, that he might appear in the world, as a Preacher of Truth and Righteousness.*

The importance of Christ's assumption of this character will be evident from the following particulars.

1st. *The importance of the Character itself.*

No intellectual character is so great, or so important, as this. The highest wisdom and authority are here united, and exhibited with unrivalled lustre. The subjects unfolded are the most interesting in the Universe: The character, pleasure, and works, of God; the nature, and destiny, of Man; the nature of holiness and sin; the laws, by which our duty is prescribed and regulated; the means, by which eternal life is obtained; the termination of this earthly system; and the introduction of another, wholly new, immortal, and divine.

In the assumption of this character Christ became the Lawgiver, and Teacher of a World, and indeed of the Universe; unfolded all the wisdom, and all the holiness, attainable by mankind throughout endless duration; and disclosed the perfect attributes and immeasurable glories, of JEHOVAH. Angels in his instructions saw what all the splendours of the heavenly system had never illuminated; and found a wisdom, displayed on the footstool of the Creator, which their own exalted world, notwithstanding the perfection with which it is arrayed, had never ushered into light. In this character, then, it was suitable to the glory of Christ, that he should *have the pre-eminence.*

2dly. *The lustre which it shed upon his life.*

Christ is the only Teacher, ever found in this world, whose life exactly, and perfectly, accorded with his instructions. No object is so edifying, as this accordance. The perfect holiness of the Redeemer would have been less clearly seen and less deeply felt, if we could not have compared his actions with the perfect rules of life, uttered by his own mouth. This truth needs no other evidence, except the continual appeal to the fact, made by all Christians in their conversation and writings; an appeal, showing more forcibly than arguments can do, the strong impressions, made by this fact on their minds. The peculiar excellence and dignity of Christ is here seen with the highest advantage; as being seen in the strongest light, and seen alone.

3dly. *The proof, which it furnished, that all his precepts are capable of being obeyed, with a suitable disposition, by a human being.*

Christ was a man, as well as God; differing from other men only in wisdom, and excellence. In this character he perfectly observed every precept, which he uttered, so far as it was applicable to himself. In this manner he taught, unanswerably, that other teachers, and all other men, would do the same, if they possessed, and so far as they possessed, the same disposition. The precepts, therefore, are reasonable in themselves; and all the difficulty, found by us in obeying them, arises from our disinclination. Had Christ left the Gospel to be preached by the Apostles only; this trait in his character would, at the best, have been dimly seen, and feebly regarded.

4thly. *The Example, which he thus furnished to all future preachers of the Gospel.*

The example of Christ in this respect is perfect. A particular display of its excellencies will, however, be more advantageously made hereafter. Suffice it, now, to observe, that it was an example indispensably necessary for men in every period of time, and peculiarly at the time when it was furnished. The Gospel *then began to be preached;* and the manner, in which it ought to be preached, all future preachers needed to know, for their direction: the gentleness, meekness, candour, patience, clearness, simplicity, firmness, boldness, and unwavering integrity, which every preacher

ought to display; which Christ alone has perfectly displayed; but which thousands of preachers have exhibited in far higher degrees than they would ever have reached, if they had not been presented with this glorious Example, to direct and animate them, in this great duty.

The Examples of this nature, actually existing at that time in the world, were such, as only to mislead, and corrupt, those who followed them. The pride of both *Jewish* and *Heathen* Teachers; the dissoluteness of their lives; their covetousness; their sickly love of human applause; the blind devotion of the former to the silly and immortal traditions of the Elders; and the theoretical spirit, the sophistry, and the empty declamation, of the latter; rendered a new example, free from all these deplorable defects, indispensable to all future teachers, who wished to benefit their fellow-men.

IV. *It was necessary, that Christ should preach the Gospel, in order to the authoritative abolition of the peculiarities of the Mosaic system.*

These peculiarities are called by St. *Peter*, Acts xv. 10, *a Yoke, which neither our fathers, nor we*, (that is, the *Jews*) *were able to bear.* For the Gentiles at large it would have been not only an insupportable yoke, but a system of rites and duties, with which their accordance would, in many cases, have been impossible. Still all these were sanctioned by an authority confessedly divine. Equal authority was necessary to abrogate them. Yet this abrogation was absolutely necessary to the success of the Gospel. The authority of the *Apostles* would not, I think, in this case, have been submitted to by the *Jews;* nor easily have been placed in their estimation above, nor in an even balance with, that of *Moses;* but would probably have been classed with that of the Prophets, who succeeded *Moses*, and who were universally, and justly, considered as possessing an authority inferior to *his*.

The *Jews* were taught to expect the only material change, which would ever exist in the *Mosaic* system, from that *Prophet, whom the Lord their God was to raise up unto them, like unto Moses.* This Prophet not one of the Apostles could claim to be. Not one of them, therefore, could arrogate to himself the authority, by which that system was to be changed. This belonged exclusively to Christ, the Prophet thus foretold; the Prophet, from whom the Scriptures themselves taught the *Jews* to expect material alterations in their religion.

Had Christ, then, been silent on this subject, it is not easy to conceive how the *Jews* could have been persuaded, that the system was to be changed at all; nor, if *they* had not been persuaded, how the Gentiles could either have realized, or maintained, this important fact.

V. *It was necessary, that Christ should preach the Gospel, to furnish an opportunity of faith, and conversion, to the Jews, who lived at that time.*

Although Christ, as a preacher, was less successful than his Apostles, yet we learn from the Scriptures, that several hundreds, and, if I mistake not, that in all probability thousands, believed his word. The importance of this event needs no explanation, so far as the salvation of these believers only is considered. But there is another point of view, in which this subject demands an explanation at the present time. The persons, converted by the preaching of Christ, were themselves the only Preachers of the Gospel, whom at his ascension he left behind him in the world. From his preaching they derived their own conversion, and their qualifications for the business of converting others. The existence of these Preachers, since all Christians become converts by means of the truths, contained in the Gospel, was absolutely necessary to the conversion of their fellow-men; and the preaching of Christ was equally necessary to the conversion of themselves.

When we remember, that in the number of the Preachers of the Gospel the Apostles are included, the importance of this article will appear in its proper light. To them the whole Christian world, throughout the past, present, and future, ages of time, confessedly owes its redemption from Spiritual darkness, and its introduction *into* the *marvellous light* of Christ's kingdom.

But it is only indebted to them in the immediate sense. Ultimately, this immense blessing is owing to the preaching of the Redeemer himself. The importance of his preaching, therefore, may be fairly estimated from the greatness of the blessing.

VI. *It was necessary that Christ should preach the Gospel, for the purpose of furnishing important evidence of its divine origin.*

Interesting evidence of the divine origin of the Gospel is derived from the fact, that it was preached by Christ; and *that* in two ways.

1st. *It cannot be rationally supposed, that a mere man, educated as he* WAS *without any advantages, beside those enjoyed by the poor people of the Jewish nation, generally, could have devised the Gospel by the strength of his own mind.*

The *Jews*, asked, with the utmost good sense, this question concerning our Saviour: *How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* John vii. 15. The only rational answer to this inquiry is, that what they meant by *letters*, viz. *the wisdom which he taught*, he received immediately from God. It is plainly impossible, that he should have devised this wisdom, had he been ever so advantageously educated, either from the frivolous and superstitious doctrines of his countrymen, or from the vain, gross, erring, and self-contradictory philosophy of the Heathen. Scarcely any thing can be imagined more unlike the Gospel of Christ, than the instructions, given by both these classes of men. But Christ was not thus educated. On the contrary, he was in the proper sense an unlearned man. That, which he taught, sprang up, therefore, originally in his own mind. But no other such mind ever appeared in this

world. Nor was such wisdom ever taught, here, by any man, whether learned or unlearned. That it should be taught by a man unlearned, as he was, from the mere force of his own mind, is a far more improbable counteraction of those laws, which regulate, and limit, the nature of man, than a Revelation from God can be, of any supposable laws of nature.

2dly. *Christ proved the Gospel to be from God by his life and miracles.*

Christ asserted his Doctrine to be derived immediately from God. To prove the truth of this assertion he wrought a multitude of wonderful miracles; and appealed to *them*, as decisive evidence, that it was true. A miracle can be wrought by none but God; for no other being can suspend, or counteract, that infinite power, which is unceasingly employed in bringing events to pass, according to those which are called the laws of nature. But God cannot work a miracle, to support a falsehood: for this would be no other than a declaration, that the falsehood was true. The miracles of Christ, therefore, were an unquestionable proof that his Gospel is a Revelation from God.

The holiness of his life is another proof of the divine origin of the Gospel: a proof not less solid, although, perhaps, less frequently allowed its full force. No miracle is a more palpable contradiction to the laws, which respect the nature of man in this world, than the perfect holiness of Christ. At the same time, this character forbids, as absurd and contemptible, the supposition, that he was capable of uttering a known falsehood.

But Christ declared that his Gospel was from God. Coming from such a person, the assertion cannot, without perfect irrationality, be called into question.

Had not these proofs of the divine origin of the Gospel been furnished by Christ, the evidence on this subject would undoubtedly stand on very different ground, and want not a little of its present strength and completeness.

VII. *It was necessary that Christ should preach the Gospel, in order to the fulfilment of numerous prophecies, which foretold this part of his character.*

One of these, contained in Isaiah lxi. and applied by Christ to himself, Luke iv. 18, 19, may stand in the place of all others. *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* The predictions of the Scriptures were not written, merely that they might be fulfilled; but, when they were written, it became indispensable, that they should be fulfilled. The prophetical character of Christ was predicted, because it was an event determined on by infinite Wisdom; because of its own intrinsic importance, and utility to the universe;

and because the prediction itself, also, was in many respects useful and important. After it was once written, those who hear me, will, without the aid of an explanation discern with a glance, that its fulfilment became indispensable.

For all these reasons, and some others which we can comprehend, and undoubtedly for others, which lie beyond our reach, it was necessary that Christ should assume, and execute, the office of a preacher of the Gospel. It is hoped that this attempt to elucidate a subject, so interesting in itself, of such magnitude in the scheme of redemption, and yet so rarely an object of investigation, or even of attention, will not be unedifying to those persons, who regard the Mediation of Christ with reverence and complacency.

# SERMON XLV.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—HIS PERSONAL PREACHING.—THE THINGS WHICH HE TAUGHT.

JOHN vii. 46.—*The officers answered, Never man spake like this Man.*

IN the last discourse, I proposed to consider *the Character of Christ as a Prophet;* or *as the great Preacher of Truth and Righteousness;* under the following heads.

I. *The Necessity of his preaching the Gospel:*

II. *The Things which he taught:*

III. *The Manner of his preaching:* and,

IV. *The Consequences of his preaching.*

The first of these subjects I discussed at that time. I shall now proceed to an Examination of the

II. Viz. *The Things which he taught.*

In the context we are informed, that the *Sanhedrim* sent officers to take Christ, as he was preaching in the temple, and bring him before them. When they returned without him, they were asked by the *Sanhedrim*, why they had not brought him. They answered in the words of the text: *Never man spake like this man;* (that is) "The things which he said, and the manner in which he said them, were such, as never before were exhibited by any human being."

These words were uttered by *Jews*, his enemies; by officers and dependents of the *Sanhedrim*, his most bitter enemies; by those officers, when commissioned to seize him for trial and punishment; by those officers, therefore, when under the strongest motives to take him, as being exposed to danger and punishment, if they did not take him; and, finally, are uttered, as containing the only reason why they did not take him. All these facts teach us, that the things which Christ spoke, and the manner in which he spoke them, were singularly excellent and impressive; so excellent and impressive, as to induce these *Jews* to allege it as the only reason why they had not performed their official duty. It is not easy to conceive how a more convincing testimony could have been given to the unrivalled excellency of Christ's preaching. Particularly will this appear, if we remember that the doctrines and precepts of Christ violated all the prejudices of the human heart; especially of *Jews;* and that there was nothing in his *manner*, of the kind which is usually called *popular;* or calculated to catch, for the moment, the applause of his audience, and produce a favourable bias towards the Speaker. In the consideration of this and the following heads, we shall have opportunity to examine, in some measure,

how far the things, recorded of Christ, will warrant us to entertain the same opinion.

Among other things taught by Christ, I shall mention

I. *The Abolition of the peculiarities of the Mosaic system.*

The Mosaic system consisted of three great parts; the Moral, the Judicial or Political, and the Ceremonial. All the peculiarities of this system belong to the two last; the first being in its own nature applicable to mankind, generally, in all circumstances. That these peculiarities were one day to be abolished was often indicated by the prophets of the Old Testament, from the days of *Moses* down to those of *Malachi*. This seems to be sufficiently indicated by our Saviour himself in his discourse to the disciples, going to *Emmaus*. Luke xxiv. 25, &c. *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself. The things concerning Christ* are here asserted to have been spoken *by Moses and all the prophets:* viz. his life, death, and exaltation. But with these, we know, was interwoven a change in the *Mosaic* system; a change, therefore, more or less exhibited by *Moses*, and all the succeeding prophets; by some of them expressly; by others only in hint, allusion, or inference.

St. *Paul*, who informs us, that Christ hath *blotted out his handwriting of ordinances, which was against us, and contrary to us; taken it out of the way, and nailed it to his cross*, who declares that Christ *hath made both Jews* and Gentiles *one; and broken down the middle wall of partition, abolished in his flesh the enmity between* them, *even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances;* argues this fact, also, at length, as declared by the Prophet *Jeremiah. For*, saith he, *if that first Covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. But finding fault, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will complete a new Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah*, &c. *By saying A new Covenant, he hath made the former old. Now that which decayeth, and waxeth old, is ready to vanish.** See Jer. xxxi. 31, &c. Heb. viii. 7, &c.

The *Mosaic* system, therefore, was originally designed in part, (viz. that part of it, which consisted of *the commandments contained in Ordinances*) to be abolished, at some future period. It was also to be abolished, when the *New Covenant* was to be *completed;* the Covenant, originally published to *Abraham*, but completed under the Christian dispensation.

That it was to be abolished by Christ is indicated in the prophecy concerning him, dwelt on so largely in the preceding discourse. *I will raise up unto them a Prophet like unto thee*, that is,

a Prophet, who, like thee, shall bring into the Church a new dispensation, and change whatever needs alteration in the old; even as thou hast done with respect to the patriarchal dispensation.

The same truth is, also, abundantly declared by preceding Prophets, especially *Isaiah;* who describes at large the very changes, actually made by Christ in this dispensation, almost as distinctly as the Apostles; at least in several particulars.

Christ published this abolition of the peculiarities of the *Mosaic* system.

In the first place, *by teaching, that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were henceforth to be the people of God.*

*And, I,* saith he, *if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.* John xii. 32. Again; *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them, also, must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.*

The *Jews*, under the dispensation of *Moses*, were the only people of God. All others, who became members of the Church, became such by being proselyted to the *Jewish* religion, and obeying the *Jewish* laws throughout; in other words, by becoming *Jews* in every thing except blood. But Christ here declares, that the *Gentiles*, as such, shall become members of his Church, and belong to his fold; hear, and follow him; and thus constitute a part of the people of God.

Secondly. *By teaching the uselessness of external rites.*

Christ exhibited in many ways the emptiness of external rites: particularly by declaring, that *meats and washings*, and other things of the like nature, neither purified on the one hand, nor on the other defiled, the man; and universally by showing, that internal purity and integrity constituted the only object of the divine approbation, and the only title to the kingdom of God.

Thirdly. *By instituting a new Ministry in the Church.*

This he did by Commissioning the Apostles, and all other ministers, Matt. xxviii. 18, &c. to *go into all the World, preaching the Gospel, and discipling all nations, and baptizing them in*, or into *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* In this Commission he invested a new set of men, in the place of *Jewish Priests and Levites*, with all the authority, and offices, of ministers in the future Church of God. The *Jewish* Ministry was therefore, henceforth done away.

Fourthly. *By substituting Baptism and the Lord's Supper for the Jewish Sacraments of Circumcision and the Passover.*

Christ made Baptism the initiatory ordinance of the Christian Church, and the Lord's Supper the confirmatory one. Circumcision, therefore, and the Passover, ceased of course. Besides, the Death of Christ the Antitype of the Passover, having taken place; the Passover, which typified it, ceased of course.

Fifthly. *By substituting a new, simple, and spiritual, worship for the ceremonial worship of the Jews.* In his discourse with the *Sama-*

*ritan* woman, Christ said, *The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worhippers shall worship the Father, in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

In the parable of *the sower*, also, he declares, that they, who *received the seed in good ground, are such as receive the word in an honest and good heart;* and that these only are either fruitful or accepted.

Sixthly. *By teaching that God was to be worshipped, acceptably, wherever he was sincerely worshipped, and not in the temple at Jerusalem only.*

In the abovementioned conversation with the *Samaritan* woman, Christ said, *Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* He also, as you well know, predicted the destruction of *Jerusalem*, the temple, and its services; declaring, that *not one stone* of the temple *should be left upon another, which should not be thrown down;* that *Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled;* and that *all these things should come to pass* during the continuance of the then existing generation. In the mean time, he declared to his disciples, that *wherever two or three of them should be met together in his name, there he would be in the midst of them.*

It needs no proof, that in these declarations he *caused the sacrifice and the oblation to cease;* and put a final end to the peculiarities of the *Mosaic* system.

II. *Christ taught the same system of Religion, which was taught by Moses.*

The system of Religion, taught in the Old and New-Testament, is one, and the same. This Christ has himself sufficiently declared in his sermon on the Mount. One of the first declarations in it, is this: *Think not, I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

The system of *Natural Religion*, taught in the Scriptures, is one, and unchangeable. *Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one jot, or one tittle, of the Law*, on which it is founded, and by which the duties of it are required. As the Law is unchangeable; so the duties, which it requires, are unchangeable also. The Relations, on which this Law is founded, and whence these duties arise, are eternal and immutable. Of course, the Law itself, the duties which it requires, and the conditions of acceptance and rejection, together with all the truths, or doctrines, which in Natural Religion, or the Religion founded on mere Law, are the proper, obligatory objects of Faith, must for ever be the same. Accordingly, our Saviour, when the Lawyer asked him, *Which is the first and great commandment of the Law?* declared, after reciting the two great commands, that *on these two hang all the Law and the Prophets;* or the system of Religion contained in the Old Testament. At the same time, he

recited these commands, as being those, on which was also suspended his own religion; which were still in full force, and the foundation of all Virtue or Moral Excellence.

Nor is the *Christian system* substantially different in the New Testament from what it is in the Old. By the Christian system I intend *the system of doctrines and duties, by means of which apostate creatures are restored to obedience and favour. The Gospel*, says *St. Paul, was preached to Abraham.* It was also disclosed to our first parents. Christ, says *St. Peter, preached*, (that is, by the Voice of *Noah*) *to the spirits in prison:* viz, the rebellious world, imprisoned under the divine sentence, during one hundred and twenty years preceding the Deluge. *Your father Abraham*, says our Saviour to the *Jews, rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. All these*, says *St. Paul*, speaking of the Old Testament Witnesses from *Abel* to *Daniel* and his companions, *died in Faith:* that is, the Faith of the Gospel. Now therefore, says the same Apostle again to the Ephesian Christians, *Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets; Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* It would be useless to recite more passages to this purpose; although many more might easily be recited. These prove in the most decisive manner, that there is One system of Religion, only, taught in the Old and the New Testament; one Law, on which the whole is ultimately founded; one system of doctrines and duties of what is called *natural religion;* one system of doctrines and duties of the *Christian system*, appropriately so called: that the Gospel was preached not only to *Abraham*, but to the *Jewish and Patriarchal* churches in every age: that good men have always died in the faith of the Gospel: that the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles is the same: and that of both, Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone.

III. *Christ taught all the fundamental doctrines of this system.*

By the fundamental doctrines of the Christian system, I intend those, which are necessary to be believed, and obeyed, in order to the attainment of salvation. Such, for example, are the existence and perfections of the one God; the law of God; its righteous and reasonable character; the rebellion, apostacy, and corruption, of man; the impossibility of justification by the works of the Law; Christ's own divine character as the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; justification by faith in him; the nature and necessity of regeneration, faith, repentance, and holiness of heart and life; a future state; a judgment; and a recompense of reward to the righteous and the wicked beyond the grave.

I will not say, that the belief of every one of these is indispensable to salvation, but they are all essential parts of one system; and within this list is found whatever is thus necessary to be believed. That Christ taught all these things will not, I suppose, be questioned by any man, who admits that they are at all taught in the Scriptures.

IV. *Christ taught the religion of the Scriptures more plainly and perfectly, than those who went before him.*

In a former discourse, I considered the character of the Redeemer, *as the Light of the world;* and observed, that he is exhibited in the Scriptures, as the source of all knowledge, natural, revealed, and spiritual, concerning moral subjects. Agreeably to this general character, he appeared with peculiar splendour, as the great Luminary of the world, while executing the office of a Preacher of truth and righteousness. Every subject, which he discussed, he illustrated, and every duty, enjoined by him, he inculcated, with a force, distinctness, and impression, utterly unrivalled by any preceding instructer.

Particularly; he explained the nature and extent of *the Divine Law* far more perfectly than *Moses* and the *Prophets*. Of this truth his Sermon on the Mount is the most illustrious instance, of which we are able to form a conception. In this wonderful discourse he inverted some, and subverted others, of the Jewish opinions, established a long time before he commenced his ministry, concerning the substance of the Mosaic religious system; explained the extent and comprehensiveness of the law; and taught the wonderfully various, minute, and exact, manner, in which its precepts are applicable to the moral concerns of mankind. *David* had formerly said, while addressing himself to the Most High, *Thy commandment is exceeding broad.* But Christ first unfolded the extension of the divine law to every thought and affection, as well as to every word and action, of mankind. At the same time, he exhibited the nature of genuine obedience in a light, new, and altogether nobler than had before been imagined; presenting to the eyes of mankind this obedience, otherwise termed holiness, or virtue, as more expanded, more dignified, more refined, and formed for a destination superior to what was found in the instructions, given by the wisest men under the *Mosaic* dispensation. Whatever was limited, and merely *Jewish*, he took away; cleansing the intellect from every film, which had bedimmed, or narrowed, its views; and releasing the heart from every clog, which had checked the progress of its affections. The soul, therefore, freed in this manner from its former corporeal incumbrances, was prepared by his instructions to *renew its strength, to mount up with wings as an eagle, to run* in the Christian course *and not be weary, to walk and not faint.*

In the same perfect manner, and to a considerable extent in this very discourse, as well as more fully in his discourses at large, he explained *the Gospel* to mankind. The scheme of salvation to apostates through a Redeemer was very imperfectly taught by *Moses*, and was left in no small degree of obscurity even by *David* and *Isaiah*. It was reserved for Christ, by whom *came grace and truth*, to make the *way of holiness a highway, in which way-faring men, though fools*, were by no necessity compelled to *err*. So fully, so distinctly, so completely, has Christ pointed out the way to eternal

life, that we often see heathens, savages, slaves, and even little children, as well as unlettered men in Christian countries, entering into it, and walking safely onward to the end.

Among the things which Christ has thus clearly explained to mankind, I have selected the following.

1st. *He taught mankind, that the heart is the seat of all virtue and vice, or, in Scriptural language, of holiness and sin.*

Matt. xv. 16, *Jesus said to his disciples: Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.* And again, Matthew xii. 34, *He said to the Pharisees, O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*

By declaring that the heart was the only seat of good and evil, Christ taught us several lessons of great importance to our safety, and well-being.

*He taught us, particularly, how to distinguish with accuracy between moral good and evil.*

So long as men supposed moral good and evil to lie either wholly, or partially, in their external actions, it was impossible, that they should make this distinction with any degree of accuracy: for the very same external actions, so entirely the same as to be distinguishable by no human eye, proceed from principles directly opposite, and are intended to promote directly opposite ends. In the actions themselves, therefore, there is no difference; and, of course, no foundation for any distinction in their moral character. But, when the good and evil are referred to the heart, the intention, the accordance with different motives, we cannot fail, unless through an unnecessary, and therefore criminal, negligence, to discern whether we form good or bad intentions, and whether we accord with good or evil motives. In this manner our duty, and our disobedience also, are in ordinary cases, to say the least, made plain and obvious; and we are saved from that perplexity and suspense, whose only influence is to delay, bewilder, and distress the mind.

*In this manner also, Christ has taught us where our principal safety lies;* (viz.) *in carefully watching our thoughts.*

*David*, in those golden precepts recited by *Solomon* in the 4th chapter of *Proverbs*, had, long before our Saviour's incarnation, said, *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* But this precept seems to have been imperfectly understood,

and little insisted on, and its importance imperfectly realized, by those who preceded the Redeemer. He, on the contrary, by showing that the heart was the only seat of good and evil, and teaching that the nature of the streams was derived solely from the fountain, taught, also, in a manner which could not be misapprehended, that the supreme duty and interest of man lay in guarding the fountain itself from every impurity. As all good and all evil commence here; to watch the state of the thoughts and affections becomes a duty of immeasurable importance. Proportionally important is the lesson, by which this duty is taught and enjoined.

*In the same manner also, Christ taught the emptiness of external and ceremonial performances.*

Many of the *Jews*, and all the *Heathen*, placed the whole of their religion in such performances. Christ struck at the root of this fruitful stem of falsehood; a production, not unnaturally cherished by the splendid ceremonies of the *Mosaic* ritual.

Although the religion of the heart was actually taught, and taught with great force and propriety, in the *Mosaic* system; yet the splendour of the worship which it enjoined, and the strong impressions made on the imagination by the nature, and multitude, of its rites, easily drew off the attention of gross and careless minds from the thing typified to the type; from spiritual worship and real duty to a mere external observance.

For several ages before Christ appeared, the *Jews*, and among them the teachers of their law, had leaned more and more towards an unqualified approbation of mere external rites, and a general substitution of mere external conduct for the duties enjoined by Religion. To the opinions of these men Christ, on many occasions, opposed himself in form, and with irresistible efficacy. Whatever stress may be laid upon them by others, it is impossible for his disciples to regard them as being virtuous, even in the remotest sense; or as being of any moral use, except as occasional aids and means of virtue.

2dly. *Christ taught mankind, that virtue consists solely in loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.*

*On these two commands*, said he to the scribe, *hang all the law and the prophets.* Out of these commands arise all the precepts, taught by *Moses and the Prophets;* precepts, which have no other nature, nor end, but to explain, and enjoin, this universal law of God. He who keeps these, therefore, keeps them all. Of course, he is the subject of that obedience, which God has required; of moral excellence; of real amiableness in the sight of his Maker.

The distinction between virtue and vice, exhibited under the first head, as so successfully made by the doctrine there specified, was here completed. When virtue is made to consist wholly in love, and love itself is at the same time so exactly defined; all the facility is given, which can be desired, for the purpose of discriminating between virtue and sin.

3dly. *Christ taught that the meek and lowly virtues, as they are called, or in other words exercises of virtue, are superior in their excellency to any others.*

Mankind have universally admired magnanimity, active courage, contempt of danger and death, and other exercises of a bold and vigorous spirit. Nay, so greatly have they admired them, not only as to regard with a forgiving eye those who have exhibited them, even in the midst of crimes and excesses, but to yield to them, when guilty of every enormity, their universal and unqualified applause. I do not deny that these may be indications and exercises of virtue. There are undoubtedly occasions, on which we are required to be *strong, and of a good courage;* and, when we assume this character from a sense of duty, and for just and benevolent purposes, we are really, and may be eminently, virtuous.

On the other hand, the meek and lowly exercises of this spirit; such as meekness, humility, patience, submission, gentleness, placability, moderation, and forgiveness; although, perhaps, by most persons allowed to be virtuous, are yet by almost all unadmired and unesteemed. Still, our Saviour has unquestionably exhibited these, both in his instructions and in his example, as wholly superior to the others. He descants on them oftener: he dwells on them more: he presents them more frequently to us in his life; or rather his whole life is an uninterrupted exhibition of them. He plainly attaches to them a higher importance, as they are in themselves: and he makes them more essential to the character of a Christian, and to the attainment of salvation. This, it must be acknowledged, is a current of instruction running directly counter to that of Poets, Historians, and Philosophers, in all ages; and to the general course of human feelings, relating to this subject. It cannot but be useful to examine, for a moment, how far this conduct of the Redeemer accords with the decisions of experience and common sense.

It is evident beyond a debate, that the meek and lowly virtues have in themselves no tendency to produce any part of those miseries, with which mankind have afflicted each other. If we were humble, we should never become the authors of those evils which have regularly sprung from pride. If we were meek; we should not impatiently feel injuries, nor give pain in those numerous instances in which it is created by wrath. If we were gentle; we should not do injuries to others. If we were forgiving; we should not revenge them on others. If we were moderate; we should prevent the evil effects, which always spring from ungoverned passions; particularly from envy, wrath, and the passion for pleasure. If we were placable; we should cut off the mass of calamities, which is found in alienation of heart, unrelenting aversion, and irreconcileable estrangement of affection; and instate in its place that serene and self-approved enjoyment, which springs from the cordial reconcilement of minds, previously the seats of real, though

imperfect good-will. If we were patient; we should neither murmur at God, nor at each other; and should at the same time lessen half the evils, which we felt, by a quiet submission to the hand of our Creator. Who does not see, that, if these virtues had their full and proper influence on human hearts, and human affairs, Man would assume a new character, and the world a new face? Who does not see, that a great part of the guilt and misery, now suffered, would vanish; and that in its place would be found peace and happiness, transcending all easy estimation?

Equally evident is it from experience, that those, in whom these virtues presided, have never in fact produced these miseries. Often have they been among the principal sufferers, but never numbered among the actors, of this tragedy. As this position cannot, and will not, be denied; to insist on it any further would be useless.

On the other hand, to that characteristic of man, which is styled *heroism*, has been owing a great part, and that usually the most dreadful part, of human sufferings. Active courage has in every age filled the world with tumult, contention, and bloodshed; destroyed the labours and enjoyments, the peace and hopes, of men; overturned temples; consumed cities with fire; and converted kingdoms into deserts. All these are causes of misery only. At the same time, it has rarely done good, except by accident; and, however admired and applauded by the silly mind of man; has undoubtedly been one of the chief curses, which God has permitted to visit this unhappy world.

I have already said, that I do not deny these exercises of heroism to be capable, in certain circumstances, of being virtuous; and even eminently virtuous. Still, it ought to be remarked, that, if *the other class of virtues* were to have their proper influence on mankind, *these* would not exist; because there would be no occasion for them. Were no injuries done, there could be no occasion for resisting them; and, of course, no demand for active courage. The exercises of this spirit, therefore, are, at the most, of a secondary importance; and can be called forth only by preceding crimes. The meek and lowly virtues are, on the other hand, original and essential ingredients of happiness in every world; are indispensable to all private and public enjoyment; and are, therefore, of primary and inestimable value. The preference, given by our Saviour to these virtues, is of course, a proof of real and divine wisdom.

4thly. *Christ in the same complete manner taught the way, in which fallen beings may again become virtuous and happy.*

He explained his own character, as the Propitiation for sin, and the Saviour of sinners: the willingness of God to pardon, justify, and accept, them on account of his righteousness, through faith in him; accompanied by repentance, and followed by holiness of heart and life. He taught mankind, that their character by nature is sinful and odious to God; and that their own obedience can never be accepted as an expiation for their sin, or a ground of their

justification; that, unless they are born again of the Spirit of God, and possess a new and spiritual character, they cannot see the kingdom of God; and that in acquiring this character they become his disciples indeed, and prove themselves to be such by *doing whatsoever he hath commanded.* All these things, united, constitute that character, which being assumed, those, who before were apostates, return to God, and to their obedience of his will; and may evangelically claim, through his promise, a title to eternal life.

5thly. *Christ established his church in a new form, appointed in it new ministers, constituted a new discipline, and directed anew the peculiar duties of both its officers and members.*

The Church, under the *Mosaic* dispensation, was properly a national one; consisting, with the exception of such as became *proselytes*, and thus in a sense *Israelites*, of those only, and of all those, who were descended from *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*. Christ constituted the Church of the Spiritual children of *Abraham;* who were *Jews inwardly*, though not *according to the flesh; and whose praise was not of Man, but of God.* Instead of the *Priests*, who were ministers of the *Jewish* Church, he appointed *ministers of the Gospel* to be officers in the *Christian* Church. Its discipline, also, ceased to be the severe and dreadful system of proceedings, enjoined under the *Mosaic* dispensation; and became a course of advice, reproof, and, in cases of irreclaimable obstinacy, a solemn separation from the offender: all administered with the most prudent care, the tenderest good-will, and the most exemplary moderation. The peculiar duties of Christians towards each other were summarily directed by the *New Commandment;* which, to the common *benevolence*, required by the moral law towards all men, superadds *brotherly love;* or the exercise of *complacency* towards the evangelical character of their fellow-Christians. The peculiar duties of Ministers, as enjoined by Christ, are, generally, to preside over the worship and discipline of the Church; to preach the Gospel; to dispense, and, together with their fellow-Christians, whose duty it is also, to receive, the Sacraments of the New Testament.

6thly. *Christ taught also the great doctrines concerning a future state of being.*

These are the separate existence of the Soul after death; the Resurrection from the dead; the final Judgment; the misery of the wicked; and the happiness of the righteous, throughout eternity. Concerning these great subjects the Heathen only formed conjectures, supported by very imperfect arguments. The *Jewish* Scriptures, also, although really containing these doctrines in substance, exhibited them in dim and distant view. *Life and Immortality were brought to light*, that is, were clearly shown, and fully proved *by Christ* alone. To him the world is indebted for its certain knowledge, and extensive views, of things beyond the grave; things, in comparison with which all that exists in the present life is *nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.*

From this summary view of the Instructions of Christ, it is evident, that he has taught every thing, necessary for the knowledge of our duty, the attainment of holiness, and the best conduct of a virtuous life; has established his Church on a new and happier foundation; instituted a simpler and purer worship; suited its whole economy to the circumstances of all nations; prepared it to extend easily, and happily, throughout the world; furnished mankind with the best means of obtaining salvation; and engaged them by the most cogent motives, placed before their eyes, to seek effectually a glorious and blessed immortality.

# SERMON XLVI.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—THE MANNER OF HIS PREACHING.

JOHN vii. 46.—*Never man spake like this Man.*

IN my last discourse I considered the second division of the proposed examination of Christ's prophetical character, viz. *the Things which he taught.* I shall now proceed to consider

III. *The Manner of his preaching.*

Concerning this subject I observe, that Christ preached,

1st. *With perfect Plainness and Simplicity.*

By the plainness of Christ's preaching I intend generally, that he preached in such a manner, as to be easily understood by all, who were willing to understand him.

Particularly, *he used the plain, common, language of mankind; and, on no occasion, the technical language, customarily used by men of science*, and extensively used at that period by all the votaries of the fashionable philosophy. That he has never used this language will undoubtedly be admitted by those, who read his instructions; there being not even a solitary instance of it in all his discourses.

That Christ acted with entire wisdom, in this particular, is manifest from many considerations. The common language of men is the only language, which men, generally, can understand. If Christ had used any other language, particularly technical language, scarcely one of a hundred of those who heard him, or of those who read his discourses, would have been able to know what he meant. To all these the book, containing his instructions, would have been *a sealed book;* and almost every man, who read it, would have been obliged to say, I cannot understand it, for *I am unlearned.*

Nor would technical language have been of much real use to *learned* men. In Natural and Mathematical science this language has, I acknowledge, been employed with success; and that, to a considerable extent. But in Moral science, which involves all the instructions of Christ, the same thing cannot be said without many abatements. The subjects of Moral science are, generally, less distinctly and definitely conceived of, than those of Natural, particularly of Mathematical, science; and on this account, and because we have no sensible, exact standard, to which we may refer them, the terms of Moral science are, to a great extent, used at first indefinitely; and are afterwards rendered still more indefinite

by the looseness and imperfection of thinking, in succeeding writers.

At the same time, moral subjects are so important, so deeply interest the feelings, and awaken so many biasses and prejudices, that where our discernment, left to itself, might enable us to fasten on definite ideas, and to choose proper terms to express them, our biasses still lead them into error; and prevent us partly from perceiving the true import of the language, used by others, and partly from a willingness to accord with it, when perceived.

From these causes, and others like them, the technical language of moral science has generally been loose and indefinite, to a greater degree than the common language of men: and such must have been the language used by our Saviour, if he had adopted the technical language of his time. This language, also, originally difficult to be understood, would have been rendered still more obscure by every attempt to translate it into the languages of other nations. Terms of this kind have often no customary use, which can be appealed to, to fix their signification; and, being used only by some individual author, or in a peculiar sense by that author, it must be left to criticism, and often to conjecture, to determine their meaning. When used by several authors, they are commonly used with some variation of sense, either slight, or serious. In this case their signification becomes more doubtful, and the discourses, in which they are found, more perplexed. If I mistake not, no terms in ancient authors are so doubtful, as those appropriated to philosophy; many of which seem to have their meaning scarcely settled even at the present time. With these sources of doubt before them, translators would have been extremely perplexed, and would have perplexed their readers still more by their own terms, chosen, often erroneously, to express the doubtful meaning of their originals. But the language, used by our Saviour, was suited to all men; the best language for Philosophers themselves; the only language for other men. All men can understand it better than any other; most men can understand no other.

The plainness of our Saviour's manner is conspicuous, also, in *the obvious nature of his allusions and illustrations.* These were all derived from objects, familiar to the apprehension of mankind at large; according to the rule of Eloquence, in this respect, laid down by *Cicero.* Every reader of our Saviour's discourses must have observed this fact. The *city set on a hill; the salt of the earth; the candle, which is not to be set under a bushel, but on a candlestick; the vine, and the branches; the Shepherd, and the sheep;* are instances, which cannot be forgotten. These, and others of the like nature, are the happiest of all allusions, and the best of all illustrations. They are natural, but forcible; every where offering themselves, and every where beautiful; familiar, but possessed of sufficient dignity; and attended always with this high recommendation, that they are easily understood by men in every situation of life.

The plainness of our Saviour's manner is remarkably evident, also, *in his parables*. Instruction appears to have been communicated in allegorical discourses, generally resembling these, from the earliest ages. But no instructer ever formed them so happily, as Christ. The subjects, alluded to, are chosen with supreme felicity; and, the allusions are conducted with the utmost skill and success. The allegorical part of the story, is always just and impressive; commonly beautiful; not unfrequently sublime; and in several instances eminently pathetic. The meaning, which it is intended to convey, is at the same time definite, clear, and obvious. The parable, instead of shading the thought, illumines it; and instead of leaving the reader in doubt, contributes not a little to the satisfaction of his inquiries. When we consider the perplexed, enigmatical manner, in which both *Jewish* and Gentile teachers, at that time, conveyed many of their most important instructions; we shall, on the one hand, see this characteristic of our Saviour's discourses in a stronger light; and, on the other, shall be led to admire, suitably, the wisdom with which, in this respect, he taught mankind.

Nearly allied to the plainness of our Saviour's instruction is their *Simplicity*. By simplicity, in this case, I mean that general characteristic of discourse, in which both thoughts and words appear to have been adopted without the effort of selecting, and merely because they offered themselves; and to follow each other in the order in which they offered themselves, without contrivance, and in the manner most remote from either study or affectation. Of this important characteristic, as critics universally agree, the ancient writers furnish more numerous, and more perfect, examples than the moderns. Among ancient writers, those who penned the Scriptures hold, by general acknowledgment, also, the first place. But amid these, as well as all other instructers of mankind, Christ, as a pattern of perfect simplicity, stands unrivalled. His discourses, though fraught with doctrines of the most profound and wonderful wisdom, and sentiments of the highest sublimity and beauty, appear still, as if neither the words, nor the thoughts, were the result of the least study; but sprang up spontaneously in his mind, and flowed from his tongue in a sense instinctively; in a manner, strongly resembling that of children. The impression made by the manner in which they are delivered, is, that they are the result of mere unadulterated nature, prompting the speaker with an unresisted impulse; as if he knew how to speak in no other manner. The effect of this manner of discoursing is undoubtedly in an eminent degree happy; whatever may be the subject, or the drift, of the discourse. When this is didactic, simplicity gives the teacher the most desirable aspect of artlessness, candour, and sincerity. When it is historical, beside presenting the speaker as invested with these important characteristics, it lends the utmost beauty and impressiveness to his narration. When it is sublime, or pathetic, it presents

the objects which excite these emotions, in the strongest light; and excites the emotions themselves in the highest degree, which is possible. As examples, illustrating in the most perfect manner the truth of all these observations, I allege, particularly, Christ's Sermon on the mount; his Parabolic sermon, recorded, Matt. xiii.; several of his discourses with the *Jews*, recorded by St. *John;* those addressed to his disciples, commencing with the xiv. chapter; his Intercessory prayer in the xvii. of that Evangelist; the Lord's prayer; the parables of the Prodigal son, the rich man and *Lazarus*, and the good Samaritan; and his discourses concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the final judgment, in the xxiv. and xxv. of Matthew. The *parable of the prodigal Son* particularly, may be alleged as the first example of beautiful and pathetic simplicity, which has been ever given to mankind; as without a rival, and without a second.

2dly. *Christ exhibited in his manner of instructing the most perfect Modesty and Delicacy.*

Both Jewish and Heathen teachers, before the time of Christ, were remarkable for pride, vanity, and of course for boasting. Pharisaical and Stoical pride have been proverbial for near two thousand years. The *Grecian* Philosophers exhibited to the world their true character, in this respect, by calling themselves Σοφοι, or *Wise men*. Those of the East assumed denominations equally arrogant and contemptible. The pride and vanity, which they exhibited in this manner, they manifested, also, in every other form, and on every convenient occasion. Like a disagreeable odour, this unbecoming character eludes every attempt to conceal it; and forces itself upon the mind, wherever the writer becomes the subject of his own thoughts.

In direct, and perfect, opposition to them all, Christ, though teaching with a wisdom and greatness of character altogether unrivalled, has not suffered, I need not say a proud or vain thought, but even the most distant appearance of such a thought, to escape from his lips. Though more frequently, than any other teacher, compelled by the nature of his Mediatorial office, the tenor of his discourses, and the disputes in which he was engaged with the *Jews*, to become the subject of his instructions to them; and although doing, and saying, that, which, far more than any thing ever done or said, must awaken the conviction of personal greatness and superiority; yet he has never even in the most remote hint, or allusion, intimated a single indulgence of either pride, or vanity, in his own mind. No resemblance of boasting can be found in all his discourses. Himself, as an object of admiration, or applause, is for ever out of sight, and out of remembrance.

Delicacy is the kindred, the ally, of modesty; and an attribute of instruction, as well as an excellency of character, which appears to have been very imperfectly known to the teachers, both *Jewish* and Heathen, who lived at, or before, the time of our Saviour.

From them all he is perfectly distinguished by the most complete exhibition of this excellence. Not a sentiment, not a word, has fallen from his lips, which can give pain, in this respect, to a mind of the most finished refinement and virtue; not a word, not a sentiment, fitted to awaken one improper thought, or to allure in the least degree to any unbecoming action.

3dly. *Christ taught with entire Boldness and Integrity.*

These highly honourable characteristics of our Saviour's instruction are every where visible, and, so far as I know, universally acknowledged. Particularly are they conspicuous in his open, intrepid attacks on the Pharisees and Sadducees; the men, who at that time held the whole power of the *Jewish* Government, and the whole influence over the *Jewish* nation. These sects, also, were the leaders of that nation in all their bigotry, their miserable superstition, and their deplorable devotion to a mere outside morality and worship. They corrupted them in their moral and religious principles, and introduced a sensual, loose, and nearly atheistical system of doctrine and practice. To these men Christ, with no defence but his own wisdom, innocence and purity, opposed himself with uniformity, vigour, and immovable firmness: exposing the unsoundness of their wretched doctrines, the futility of their arguments, the hypocrisy of their professions, and the enormous turpitude of their lives. All this he did with such clearness of evidence, and such pungency of reproof, that they themselves often shrunk from the detection, and trembled for the very existence of their principles and their power.

At the same time, and in the same manner, he reproved, and exposed, all the popular prejudices of his Country. Gentle, modest, and humble, beyond example, he united with this character an unyielding fixedness of principle and deportment, and a perfect destitution of that love of popularity, and that desire of applause, which are such prominent traits in the character of most of those, who have attempted the instruction of mankind. There is not in his instructions a single instance of the least concession to any religious, civil, or personal, prejudice of his Countrymen. On the contrary, he resisted them all openly, uniformly, and alike. Even their favourite doctrine, that they were, and were ever to be, the peculiar people of God, together with all the mischievous consequences which they derived from it, he resisted on many occasions, and in many forms; declaring, that they were not, in the true and scriptural sense, the children of *Abraham;* and showing them, that their natural descent from this patriarch would not, by itself, be the least advantage to them; while the abuse of their privileges would only increase their guilt, and enhance their final condemnation.

Nor was Christ less direct and severe in reproving his friends. In them, notwithstanding all the gentleness and tenderness, with which he taught them, he allowed no variation from truth, or

duty; and reproved them on every occasion for their prejudices, bigotry, unbelief, contentions, faults, and follies of every kind. Exact truth, and unwarping holiness, appear evidently to have been the objects, which he made the standard of all his instructions, as well as of his life. No tenderness, friendship, or gentleness of disposition; no fear of the populace, or the powerful; prevented him from reaching this standard on every occasion. No zeal transported him beyond it. He, and he alone, among those who have taught mankind, knew how to make all the affections of man perfectly accordant with truth and duty, and perfectly subservient to the establishment of them in the world.

4thly. *Christ taught mankind with an Authority peculiar to himself.*

This characteristic of Christ's teaching was two-fold:

First. *The authority derived from the weight of his precepts, and the manner in which they were inculcated.* This I take to be especially what is intended by St. *Matthew* in the following passage: *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings,* (that is, the sayings contained in his Sermon on the Mount) *the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* In the authority of this kind, Christ far excelled every other instructer. No precepts are so important as his; no manner of teaching is so dignified, and so commanding. When we remember, that he appeared as a poor man, without friends, or influence, without power or splendour; that he proposed a new system of religion and morals; that he attacked, in many respects, the former system, the bigotry with which it was regarded, the prejudices of the multitude, and the enormous wickedness of the great: when we further remember, that in the minds of many, he overset them all, and in the minds of many more, shook them to their foundations: we cannot hesitate to acknowledge, with the *Jewish officers*, that in this particular, *never man spake like this man.*

Secondly. *Christ taught mankind with a singular Official authority.*

This is conspicuous in two things.

The first is, *that he uttered neither opinions nor advice.*

All the dictates of Christ's teaching are of the kind, which the Greeks called *Dogmas*, that is, positions peremptorily asserted without any doubt expressed, any wavering, any uncertainty, any suggestion of the possibility of error.

Every doctrine is exhibited as an absolute law of faith; and every precept, as a positive rule of practice. Every thing, which he uttered, carries with it evidently, the assurance, that his doctrines are true and certain; that his precepts are just and reasonable; and that himself is invested with full authority to prescribe both, as obligatory rules of faith and practice.

The second is, *that Christ taught in his own name, and without appealing to any authority but his own.*

This fact was mentioned in a former discourse; but it will be proper briefly to consider it, also, at the present time. All the prophets of the Old Testament prefaced their Instructions with *Thus saith the Lord.* Christ commenced his Ministry with explaining, altering, and annulling, many things, said by *them* under this authority, and acknowledged by *him* to be thus said. His own instructions, however, he never prefaced in this manner; but merely said, *I say unto you;* or, on solemn occasions, *Amen; Verily, I say unto you.* The authority, here assumed by him, was such, as to warrant him in repealing that, which had been spoken by prophets in the Name, and by the Authority, of God; and was, therefore, an authority equal to that, under which these prophets had spoken.

In this exercise of Authority, Christ stands alone; being wholly distinguished from all other teachers, both sacred and profane. The Apostles, it will be remembered, taught only in the name of Christ.

5thly. *Christ taught with uniform and singular Patience, Gentleness, and Kindness.*

I have grouped these excellencies of our Saviour's manner of teaching as I have several of those, already mentioned, on account of the intimate relation, which they bear to each other.

To dwell on this subject with minuteness cannot be necessary. All readers of the Gospel know how often Christ bore with the dullness, prejudices, and unbelief of his disciples; how often he reiterated the same instructions; how patiently he removed their prejudices; how frequently he had occasion to pronounce them *of little faith;* and how universally, and how often without reproving them, he bore with their numerous infirmities. There is not an instance in his life of an impatient, petulant word; not a single expression of the kind, which we term passionate; not an occasion, on which he lost, in the least degree, that absolute self-control, by which he was elevated above all the children of *Adam.* When the ambitious sons of *Zebedee*, through their more ambitious mother, asked of him the privilege of *sitting, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left;* he calmly replied, *It is not mine to give.* When the body of his disciples *strove, which of them should be greatest; he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and, when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them: Whosoever shall receive one of such children, in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.* When *Peter* denied him in so shameful and bitter a manner; the only reproof, which he gave him, is recorded in these words, *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.* Over *Jerusalem,* the seat of so much guilt, the scene of the messages, and of the slaughter, of so many prophets, and speedily about to be the scene of his own sufferings, he wept with inexpressible tenderness, and said.

*How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not.*

6thly. *Christ taught by his Example.*

It is a proverbial observation, that example is far more instructive than precept: an observation, verified by the experience of mankind every day, and in every place. No precepts are, indeed, seriously influential on the mind of the pupil, unless they are believed to have some good degree of influence upon the life of his instructer. On the contrary, where the instructer is supposed to speak with sincerity, and from the heart, and to be himself governed in his conduct by the very principles, which he recommends to others; very plain instructions have commonly very great power. Example, therefore, may be safely pronounced to be the best of all instruction, and the only mode of consummating the instruction of the voice.

In this kind of teaching Christ stands alone. The prophets and apostles are here left out of comparison, and out of sight. As for the heathen philosophers, their example was a mere contrast to their instruction; I mean, to such parts of it, as were just and commendable. What they taught, of this nature, they refuted in the daily conduct of their lives. But Christ's life was a perfect practical comment on all that he taught, and a perfect illustration of the nature and efficacy of his precepts. Hence his instructions have been unrivalled in their influence on mankind; and have produced effects, to which there has been in the history of the world no parallel.

I have here mentioned several primary characteristics of the Manner, in which Christ taught mankind. To form a more complete estimate of its excellence, it will, however, be necessary to consider *what he did not do*, as well as *what he did*. The superlative wisdom of the Redeemer was manifested as truly in what he avoided, as in what he accomplished.

On this subject, I observe, in the

1st place, *that he utterly declined to gratify the mere Curiosity of man.*

Many questions were proposed to him by the *Jews*, of such a nature, as to demand answers, which could only gratify curiosity. Several more, of the same kind, were addressed to him by his disciples. To all these he declined the answers, which were solicited. There are, also, very many subjects, concerning which curiosity has ever been awake; and which not only are intimately connected with the Scriptural system of religion, but are mentioned by Christ in many forms, and in some particulars extensively discussed. But such parts of these subjects, as excite mere curiosity, he has invariably left in silence; and never tempted, nor satisfied at all, this roving, restless propensity. Over all objects of this kind he has drawn the curtain of absolute concealment, and hidden them entirely from human eyes.

Among these subjects, it will be sufficient to mention one. The circumstances, which attend a future state of happiness, awaken, perhaps as extensively, and as naturally, the wishes of the mind to be minutely informed, as any thing belonging to the destiny of man. On this immense subject, Christ has, however, taught nothing, except what we plainly needed to know; and has withheld every thing else from our investigation. Others have often indulged a wandering fancy, and, in the wildest excursions concerning a future state, have attempted to explore the regions of future being, as travellers search distant countries in the present world. But Christ has chosen barely to inform us of the existence and general nature of these regions; things which we are deeply interested to know; and left these outlines to be filled up by our own actual experience, when we shall have become possessed of that happy state of being. When we remember how many uncertainties would have arisen out of such a disclosure, had it been made; how many questions, of difficult solution, or incapable of being solved; and, in a word, how greatly, and how often, the mind would have been perplexed concerning subjects, unconnected with its real good; we cannot hesitate to acknowledge the perfect wisdom, manifested in this concealment.

2dly. *Christ taught without Sophistry.*

The integrity *displayed in the reasonings of our Saviour*, is equally exact, and perfect, with that *exhibited in his declarations of facts*. In the age, in which he lived, both the Jewish and Heathen teachers were distinguished for false reasoning, as a species of art. The doctrines, which they taught, needed this defence. Accordingly, we find it employed by them on almost every occasion. Many specimens of the subtleties of the Sadducees and Pharisees are recited to us in the New Testament; particularly in the Gospels. Quibbles, paradoxes, and fetches, were the custom of the time; and were shamelessly employed to defend every favourite opinion, and attack every adversary. But false reasoning is as real a violation of integrity, as false declarations; is often as mischievous; and is always a proof of gross depravity, or gross inattention to our duty. Christ, therefore, the perfect pattern in this, as in all other, conduct, has alleged no argument but a real one; has given no argument any more force than it really possesses; and has expressed no more confidence in any argument than he really felt. The glorious contrast, which he exhibited in the exact simplicity and sincerity, with which he reasoned on every occasion, to the subtlety and sophistry, of all with whom he reasoned, and of a vast multitude of other teachers, is a pattern for all succeeding reasoners; which, if universally followed, would free the world from a great part of its doubts and errors, and the deplorable guilt and misery, by which they are followed.

3dly. *Christ has authorised no Intolerance.*

It is well known, that the *Jews*, who were distinguished for their

spiritual pride and bigotry, and who regarded other nations with an almost absolute intolerance, were never more strongly marked by these characteristics, than at the time when our Saviour appeared. Even the Apostles were not exempted from a share of this character. *Master*, said *John*, *we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.* Again, *John and James*, moved with indignation against the inhabitants of a *Samaritan* village, because they declined to receive their Master, said to him, *Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* So intolerant was the spirit even of the beloved disciple; and so benevolent, it ought to be added, was that of Christ.

In this nation, and at this period, was Christ born, and educated. But instead of imbibing, countenancing, or warranting, intolerance and bigotry, he taught, in all instances, their odiousness and guilt; and enjoined, with respect to every subject and person, the most absolute moderation, liberality, and candour; not, indeed, the fashionable liberality of licentious men in modern times; a professed indifference to truth and holiness; but a benevolent and catholic spirit towards every man, and a candid and just one towards every argument and opinion. Distinctions of nation, sect, or party, as such, were to him nothing: distinctions of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, were to him every thing. According to this scheme he framed both his instructions and his life.

4thly. *Christ taught without Enthusiasm.*

All the language, and all the sentiments, of our Saviour, were the language and sentiments of a person, perfectly satisfied of the goodness of the cause, which he had espoused, immoveably attached to it, and earnestly engaged to promote it among mankind. Still, this earnestness, this fixedness of character, differed greatly from that of most persons, who have undertaken the reformation of their fellow men. In our own as in all preceding ages, those, who have assumed the character of reformers, almost of course make a parade of their piety, and a merit of their peculiar devotion to the cause, in which they have embarked; and aim at gaining proselytes by a nice scrupulosity concerning things commonly esteemed innocent, animosity against those whose opinions they censure, and impassioned addresses to such as listen to their instructions. Christ was the opposite of all these. Little things, always, in his instructions, appeared little. Harmless things he regarded as harmless, Great and important things, only, has he taught us to regard as great and important. In his life there was no ostentation of any thing. He *came eating and drinking like* other men; and in his human nature, and appearance, differed from them in nothing but

superior wisdom and purity of character. In his discourses every thing is serious, solemn, and earnest; but every thing, at the same time, is uttered with moderation, without passion, without declamation.

No discourses in the world are more distant from fanatical declamation, and no character is more unlike that of an enthusiast, than the discourses and character of Christ. A spirit of serenity, of self-possession, of impassioned sweetness, of principled excellence, reigns throughout all his instructions, and throughout all his life, of which, elsewhere, there is no example.

5thly. *Our Saviour sought in his instructions for no Applause.*

In this characteristic, also, he was equally singular and perfect. The love of applause is the most universal, and probably the most seductive, of all human passions; particularly, in minds, raised by intelligence above the common level. So seductive is it, that *Cicero* pronounced it to be true virtue. But of this passion not a single trace appears in the whole history of Christ. The good or ill opinion, the applause or censure, of his fellow-men, whether friends or enemies, seem as if they had not been thought of by him, and as if no capacity of being influenced by them had been an original attribute of his mind. With a magnetic constancy, his thoughts and discourses were pointed alway to truth and rectitude; and the world had no power of producing in them a momentary variation.

Such was the manner, in which Christ taught mankind: a manner all his own; copied from none who preceded him, and imperfectly imitated by the best and wisest of those who came after him; a manner perfectly suited to the supreme excellence of his character, to the divine commission, which he bore; to the illustrious system of truth, which he taught; to the glorious errand, on which he was sent; and to the perfect nature of that Being, whose representative he was to the children of men.

# SERMON XLVII.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—CONSEQUENCES OF HIS PREACHING.

JOHN vii. 46.—*And the Officers answered, saying, Never man spake like this Man.*

IN the three preceding discourses, I have considered the Prophetical character of Christ, under these three heads: 1st. *The Necessity of his assuming the office of a Prophet;* 2dly. *The Things which he taught;* and, 3dly. *The Manner in which he taught them.*

I shall now proceed to the consideration of the 4th head, originally proposed concerning this subject, viz. *The Consequences of his preaching;* and, after a brief examination of these, shall conclude my observations on *the Personal Preaching of Christ* with *a few Remarks.*

The Preaching of Christ produced,

1st. *A general astonishment in those who heard him.*

*And it came to pass*, says *St. Matthew*, that *when Jesus had ended all these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* Two things are here mentioned as causes of the astonishment, occasioned by Christ's Sermon on the Mount: The things which he taught, and the manner of teaching. *The people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* It cannot be thought strange, that a scheme of doctrine, so new; so solemn; so simple; so pure; so amply fraught with inherent evidence of its truth; and, in all these respects, so opposite to that, which they were accustomed to hear from their own teachers; should produce an unusual degree of wonder in the minds of this people. Nor is it any more strange, that such a manner of teaching, as that employed by Christ, should have its share in producing this effect, and enhance the surprise, occasioned by his instructions. We, who hear these instructions from the cradle, to whom they are presented weekly from the desk, and daily by the Bible, cannot easily conceive the degree, in which they could not fail to impress the minds of men, when they were first published in the world. They were then new, and strange; and, both in the matter and the manner, were in a great measure singular. They were employed on the most important of all subjects: the sin and holiness, the ruin and recovery of mankind. They professed to contain, and communicate the will of God concerning these subjects, and of course to be a message from heaven.

At the same time, they censured, both implicitly and explicitly, most of the doctrines, taught by the Pharisees and Sadducees, most of their precepts, and the general tenor of their lives. The doctrines they showed to be false; the precepts unsound, and immoral; and the conduct of those, who taught them, to be unworthy of the profession, which they made, and contrary to the Scriptures, which, in pretence at least, they believed. These men, either alternately or conjointly, had, for a long period, held an entire and commanding influence over the *Jewish* nation. Highly venerated for their wisdom, and in many instances for their apparent sanctity, their countrymen scarcely called in question their claims to this influence, or to the character, on which it was founded. But, when Christ entered on his ministry, he stripped off the mask, by which they had been so long concealed; and left both their folly and their wickedness naked to every eye. The system, which they had so long taught without opposition, he showed, irresistibly, to be a strange compound of truths derived from the Scriptures; of falsehood and weakness, of superstitious scrupulosity and fanatical zeal, professedly drawn from the traditions of the elders; and of gross immorality and glaring hypocrisy, generated by their own minds. Their pretended sanctity both of doctrine and deportment he proved to be a mere veil, assumed to conceal their enormous avarice and ambition, pride and cruelty. As the means of future acceptance with God, he showed, that they could never avail; and that, therefore, they could only delude, and destroy, their credulous disciples. That such instructions as these, delivered by a person, whose whole life was a direct contrast to that of those, whom he thus censured, and refuted; who evidently appeared to be under the influence of no selfish passion, and no sinister motive; whose precepts required, and whose conduct exemplified, piety and benevolence without a mixture; delivered too in a manner so clear, so direct, and solemn, so universally convincing and impressive, should astonish all, who heard them, cannot be thought strange, even by us. Such was, indeed, their effect; and to such a degree, as to induce those, who heard them, to pronounce the teacher, on different occasions, a Prophet, a great Prophet, *the* Prophet foretold by *Moses*, and the Messiah. When we remember, that this teacher appeared in the character and circumstances of a Jewish Peasant; without a name; without education; without friends; we cannot but perceive, that the effect of his teaching was, in this respect, very great.

2dly. *The preaching of Christ produced great Opposition both to himself and to his doctrines.*

I have already recited many causes of this opposition. There were many more. But all of them may with propriety be reduced under these general heads. The novelty and excellency of his doctrines; the strictness and purity of his precepts; his birth; his character; the justice and pungency of his reproofs; the disap-

pointment of the expectations of the *Jews* concerning the glory and splendour of his Messiahship; and the fears of the Pharisees and Sadducees, that he would destroy their influence and power. All these things thwarted some selfish passion, of his hearers; and many of them thwarted every such passion. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that they should oppose one, who taught, and lived, so as uniformly to reprove them for their whole moral character, and daily conduct.

This Opposition commenced, almost with his Ministry, and was carried on to its termination. It was, however, carried on with different degrees of vehemence by the different classes of *Jews*. The Great, that is, the Pharisees and Sadducees, hated Christ with far more uniformity and rancour, than the Common people. The reasons are obvious. He exposed their systems of doctrine, and modes of teaching; refuted their arguments; reproved their abominable conduct; displayed to the people at large their folly and wickedness; and threatened them with the total ruin of their reputation and authority. These were offences, not to be forgiven by proud, bigotted, unprincipled, and malignant men. They were not in fact forgiven. Throughout his whole public life, they exercised the most furious resentment against him, and hesitated not to adopt every measure to compass his destruction. All, that sagacity could devise, or art execute, was employed to ensnare, and entrap, the Redeemer in his words and actions. When these measures failed, as they always did, resort was had to violence and power. These at length succeeded; and the most perfect human malignity was finally gratified by seeing the Saviour nailed to the Cross.

The people at large regarded him with far less bitterness, than their leaders. It is several times mentioned, that the efforts of the Sadducees and Pharisees to destroy Christ, were prevented of success by their fear of the people. It is frequently testified, in substance, that *the common people heard him gladly*. It is also evident, that, had not appeals been made to their doubts, fears and prejudices, with great art and perseverance, and on many occasions, their attachment both to him and his doctrines would have risen still higher, and much more nearly accorded with their interest and duty.

On a number of occasions, however, they indulged the most violent animosity against him. Almost at the commencement of his preaching, the inhabitants of *Nazareth* attempted to put him to a violent death, by forcing him down the precipice of the hill, on which their city was built. Several times, afterwards, their Countrymen endeavoured to stone him; and in the end united, at the instigation of their Rulers, in accomplishing his death, with a fury approximating to madness.

3dly. *The preaching of Christ produced the Conversion of a considerable number of his hearers.*

The number of those, who were converted by the preaching of

Christ, cannot be estimated with any exactness. The eleven Apostles, the Seventy, the more than five hundred brethren, to whom at one time Christ appeared in Galilee, after his resurrection, are numbers mentioned in the Scriptures. The last not improbably included the two first. To these we ought, I think, to add a considerable number more, since it is often said, that *some of the people*, and *many of the people, believed on him.* No reason occurs to me, why we should not, generally at least, consider the faith, here spoken of, as Evangelical. If this be admitted, the number of converts, made by the preaching of Christ, must have greatly exceeded the largest number, specified in the Gospel.

Still it is, I suppose, generally believed, that the success, with which Christ preached the Gospel, was small, compared with that of the Apostles, and compared with that, which we should naturally expect to follow preaching, of such singular excellence: especially, when the perfection of his life, and the glory of his miracles, are connected with the nature of his preaching. The success, however, was upon the whole such, as to enable the Gospel to take effectual root in this sinful world, and to provide the means of supplying preachers throughout all succeeding ages, and of spreading the Gospel, within a moderate period, over a great part of the earth.

I have now finished the observations, which I proposed to make concerning *the personal preaching of Christ;* and shall conclude this discourse with a few Remarks, naturally flowing from the considerations, suggested on this subject.

1st. *These considerations call up to our view, in an interesting manner, the Glory and Excellency of Christ as a Teacher.*

From the things, which have been said in these discourses, it is, if I mistake not, clearly manifest, that both the matter and manner of Christ's preaching were singularly important, and excellent. The errand, on which he came into the world, was the greatest, which ever entered into the conception of rational beings, or which was ever proposed in the Providence of God. Of this vast and sublime purpose the preaching of the Gospel was a primary and indispensable part. To this part he appeared perfectly equal. The will of God the Father, concerning the duty and Salvation of men, he entirely understood; and, together with it, the character, the sins, errors, ignorance, and wants, of those, to whom he was sent; their hatred of truth, their opposition to their duty, and their reluctance to be saved. The same perfect acquaintance he also possessed with the nature and import of the preceding Revelation; its types, prophecies, and precepts; the false glosses, made on its various contents by the teachers, who went before him; and the miserable prejudices, imbibed by those whom he taught. These errors he detected and exposed: these sins he powerfully reproved: and the truth and duty, opposed to them, he enjoined with a force and evidence wholly irresistible. In this manner, he taught

the way of life with such clearness, that *he who ran might read*, and that *way-faring men, though fools*, could *not*, necessarily, *err therein*.

At the same time, he adorned these instructions with a candour, frankness, gentleness, and sweetness of demeanour, with a sincerity, boldness, and energy of character, immensely honourable to himself, and supremely great and lovely in the view of every just and discerning mind. Over all, his daily example, as a moral being, cast a glorious lustre, at once transcendently beautiful in itself, and illuminating in the strongest manner the nature and excellence of all that he said.

If Christ had not come into the world; if he had not preached the Gospel; what would now have been the condition of mankind? The *Mosaic* system, of necessity confined almost entirely to the *Jewish* nation, had, before the advent of our Saviour, degenerated chiefly into a mere mass of externities. The *moral* part of this system was in a great measure neglected, or forgotten: the *ceremonial* had almost wholly occupied its place.

Even *this*, also, had lost its proper designation, and influence. The *sacrifices*, instead of being regarded as mere symbols of that real and great Atonement, *which taketh away the sins of the world*, and to typify which, they were originally instituted, seem to have been, at this time, considered as expiations in themselves. The *ablutions*, which were intended only to direct the eye to the cleansing of the Soul by the blood of Christ, and the affusion of the Spirit of grace, appear to have lost their typical character, and to have been exalted by a gross imagination into means of washing away the stains of the soul, and making it pure in the sight of God. The *oblation of incense* was apparently supposed by the suppliant to ascend with his prayers to the heavens, and to accompany them with a sweet odour to the throne of God. To *wear long clothing; to make broad their phylacteries; to pray in the corners of the streets; to fast twice a week; to bow down the head like a bulrush; to sit in sackcloth and ashes;* and to *tithe mint, annise, and cummin;* were considered as the price paid for heaven; the price, with which salvation might assuredly be purchased. In the mean time, piety to God, *Justice, judgment, and mercy* towards men, and that government of our passions and appetites, without which neither can exist, were kept out of sight, and out of remembrance. Pride and avarice, cruelty and lust, reigned without control, and without opposition. Scarce an effort seems to have been made, or even thought of, to check the tide of declension. The progress was rapid, and unimpeded, till the measure of iniquity became full. About forty years after the crucifixion, the crimes of the *Jewish* nation, according to the testimony of *Josephus*, himself a *Jew*, rose to such a height, as to forbid the longer continuance of any civilized state, or social union, among this people. Furious animosity, unexampled pollution, civil war raging with singular

violence, unparalleled treachery, and murder without bounds, then became the prominent, and almost the only, features of the *Jewish* character.

The rest of the world was absolutely overspread with Polytheism, and all the debasement, and all the miseries to which it so frequently gives birth,

Had not Christ, then, come into the world, and preached the Gospel to mankind; the *Jews* would, perhaps, have been, substantially, what, since the destruction of their nation, they have been in fact: reprobates; outcasts from God; possessing hearts *harder than the nether millstone;* impervious to truth; impenetrable by argument; shorn from the side of virtue; vagabonds in the moral, as well as in the natural, world; roaming now in quest of gain, or prey, to satisfy immediate lust; now wandering in a benighted wilderness through every by-path, to find eternal life; and mistaking the glimmerings of every *ignis fatuus*, by which they are misled, for the light of heaven.

We, in the mean time, together with all the present offspring of the Gentile world, should have been prostrating ourselves before calves and crocodiles, dogs and cats, an image of brass, or the stock of a tree. Instead of the churches, which on a thousand hills now stand open for the worship of JEHOVAH, we should, with the heathen of the Old World, have consecrated to a multitude of brutal Gods the dark groves, and still darker caves, of our mountains; or erected, with immense expense and suffering, splendid temples to the honour of thieves, strumpets, and murderers, or for the inhabitation of blocks and statues. Instead of the hymns, which here daily ascend to heaven, perfumed with the incense of Redemption, our ears would have been stunned with the outcries of the Priests of *Baal*, or the yells of the Priestesses of *Bacchus*. Instead of the communion table, which now holds out the bread of life, and invites us to eat, and live, Altars would here have smoked with the offerings of pollution, or streamed with the blood of human victims. Instead of listening to the invitations to renounce iniquity, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to lay hold on a glorious immortality, given by God himself, and announced weekly from this desk; the youths who are before me might, in some instances at least, have been trembling beneath the frown of a *Druid*, prepared to plunge his knife into their bosoms, as an offering to the Gods of superstition; no uncommon fate of bright and promising young men, in ancient times, throughout that Island, from which our ancestors emigrated to this Country.

From all these evils, and from that perfect dissolution of the moral character, of which they are either the cause, or the substance, Christ has delivered those, who receive and obey his instructions. The darkness, in which men *groped, and stumbled, and fell*, in the pursuit of eternal life, he has scattered by the sun-

shine of the Gospel. The objects of our faith, and the rules of our duty, he has written in living colours. To ignorant, sorrowful, and despairing man, despairing of future enjoyment, and future being, he has proclaimed the *glad tidings* of life eternal. To rebels and enemies he has *published* everlasting *peace*. To *Zion* he has announced, that the God, who reigns over heaven and earth, is her God. *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet* of this divine Messenger, descended from the regions of immortality to proclaim *grace*, *mercy*, *and peace*, to this ruined world!

2dly. *Christ, as a Preacher, is a perfect pattern to every Minister of the Gospel.*

That he is such a pattern *in the substance of his preaching* is a truth, which can need no comment. Every minister, whatever may be his opinions in other respects, will admit, unconditionally, that what *Christ* has said is the guide, and the substance, of all which he is to say. Nor are many words necessary to show, that he is a pattern equally perfect, and equally obligatory, *as to his manner*. It is not here intended, that *the characteristical manner of Christ*, by which he was distinguished from every other preacher, *is demanded of any minister of the Gospel*. In this respect, Christ cannot be copied by any man. The style, in which the inhabitants of the East spoke their discourses, differs materially from that, which has been adopted in *Europe*, and in this country; and each is suited to the taste of the respective inhabitants. The characteristical style of each individual, also, differs usually from that of other individuals; and that of each will ever be the best for himself; and that which he will most advantageously employ in discoursing with his fellow-men. The manner of Christ, in this respect, is not here intentionally required of any preacher. It is wholly peculiar to *Him*, and inimitable by others. At the same time, although every preacher may learn the best lessons from the *plainness and simplicity*, with which the Redeemer taught, and is bound ever to keep him in view, as in this respect the proper object of a general imitation; yet it ought also to be observed, that no preacher is warranted to assume *the authority*, with which Christ taught, enjoined, and reproved; or the *peremptoriness*, with which he threatened and promised. These are characteristics peculiar to himself; which nothing, but direct inspiration, will authorize any man seriously to imitate; and which, accordingly, no Christian, except the Apostles, has ventured to assume.

*The Spirit*, discovered by the Redeemer in this manner of instruction, is the object, which it is designed here to urge upon preachers of the Gospel for their imitation; particularly, the *candour*, *patience*, *gentleness*, *and tenderness*, displayed by him on every proper occasion. These are characteristics, which cannot fail to adorn every discourse, addressed by a preacher of the Gospel to his fellow-men. If a preacher has any sense of his own guilt, dangers, wants, hopes, or blessings; he cannot fail to feel

in a corresponding manner those of others. If he have just views of the worth of his own soul, and the importance of his own salvation; he cannot but tenderly regard the souls, and the salvation, of others. If he comprehend, at all, his own infirmities, and the unceasing need, which he has of tenderness and patience from his fellow-men; if he remember, at all, how persuasive and efficacious candour and gentleness have heretofore been in influencing his own mind; he cannot but discern the importance of exercising them towards his flock.

Nor is it less indispensable, that the preacher should possess and exhibit, the same *openness, boldness, and integrity.* The *possession of these things* is absolutely necessary, in order to the *appearance of them* in his discourses, and in his life. All counterfeits will, at the best, be suspicious; and chiefly fail of their intended effect, after a little period. But a full conviction of the Preacher's unmingled integrity; which, if it exist, can scarcely fail of being distinctly perceived; will more powerfully persuade his hearers, than all the arts of reasoning and eloquence, attainable by the human mind. At the same time, this characteristic will aim at doing them good in ten thousand ways, unthought of by the insincere preacher. Beyond this, it will accomplish the good, where all skill and contrivance will fail. To an honest, open, undaunted preacher, thoroughly believed to be such, all men will listen, who will listen at all. By such a preacher all men will be moved, who, in the same circumstances, will be moved at all. His discourses will, of course, appear to be delivered in earnest: not, perhaps, with animation, or eloquence, properly so called: with respect to these his constitutional character may be unfavourable and his habits unhappy: but with seriousness, solemnity, and the appearance of a realizing conviction, that he is uttering the message of God. Such a message, so uttered, can scarcely fail of making some useful impression on the mind. If not; it will be because the mind is not in a state, fitted to receive useful impressions.

3dly. *The Preaching of Christ is a forcible reproof to Ministers.*

Ministers, if we may judge from the sermons which they publish, are, in some instances at least, guilty of *sophistry.* Every preacher, who indulges himself in this mode of reasoning, has failed to propose, or to remember, Christ as his pattern; and whenever he solemnly reviews this part of his conduct, must feel himself powerfully reproved by the open, sincere, and exact argumentation of his Redeemer, his fair and candid statements of the opinions of his adversaries, and his solid answers to their cavils.

Ministers, at times, are *petulant, angry, and contentious; not for truth, but for victory.* Let him, who indulges any part of this spirit, look to the example of his Saviour, and be ashamed of his neglect to *walk, as Christ also walked.* Let him lay aside the spirit of a disputant, and a champion; and resume that of a disciple of his glorious Lord.

Not a small number of preachers, in one country and another, *affect a strongly impassioned, fervid, and enthusiastic manner of writing and uttering their discourses.* Their language is always intended to be vehement, bold, and highly figurative; their tones loud and violent; and their gestures accordant with both. No part of this character can be found in the preaching of Christ. Not the most distant resemblance to enthusiasm can be found in any thing which he said, or in the manner in which it was said; not an attempt to appear impassioned; not an effort to display what is customarily called eloquence. When the subjects, which he canvassed, inspired warmth, prompted imagination, and led to the adoption of figurative language; he indulged them, just as mere nature led. But he never summoned them to his assistance as a part of his scheme; nor, what is more to the present purpose, did he ever form the scheme, with an intention to give himself opportunity of calling in these auxiliaries to his discourse. A temperate manner; solemn indeed, and plainly earnest; far distant from that cold and uninterested mode, sometimes seen in the desk; but still temperate on all ordinary occasions, and raised only on extraordinary ones; was the characteristical manner of the Redeemer. His voice was pre-eminently the *still, small voice* of truth and piety; and he did *not strive, nor lift up, nor cause it to be heard in the streets.*

How different this pattern from the efforts of separatical preachers, and indeed of many others, in our own times! There is no small reason to fear, that by many men of modern days Christ, if now on earth, would be thought a very imperfect example of the best mode of preaching.

Ministers in some instances *employ their discourses in minute, wire-drawn disquisitions.* Such disquisitions can rarely be necessary in the desk; and, wherever they are not necessary, they are mischievous. No example of this nature can be found in the preaching of the Redeemer. The minds of hearers are lost in such disquisitions; their feelings blunted; and the truth and duty, recommended, are forgotten in the labour of following the ingenious discussions of the preacher.

The *timidity* of ministers is also forcibly reproved by that undaunted firmness, which Christ displayed in the midst of his bitter enemies; men, from whom he could expect nothing but hatred and violence. It is to be always remembered, that there are occasions on which some subjects cannot be urged with any hope of success, and only with a prospect of disadvantage. It will, therefore, not only be justifiable, but commendable, to withhold the communication of certain truths, and the injunction of certain duties, in peculiar seasons; because those who should hear, *cannot* (in the language of Christ) *bear them now.* But the preacher is bound to withhold them, only because he is fairly convinced, that the communication will do evil, and not good. Even here, great caution

is to be used; lest the preacher's own timidity, and not the performance of his duty, be the governing motive. In all cases, where this duty does not forbid, (and these instances are of course few) he is bound to speak the truth boldly and plainly, whether *they will hear, or whether they will forbear.* Let every timid preacher, who *shuns to declare the whole counsel of God,* under the influence of his timidity, fix his eyes on the example of his Saviour; and he will see himself most affectingly reproved, and most solemnly reminded, that the *fear of man* only *bringeth a snare.*

*The love of applause* may be said to be instinctive in the mind of man; and has, of course, a seat in that of Preachers, as well as of other men. Against this seductive passion, always ready to operate, and operating almost of course with an unhappy influence, every Preacher will find the strongest guard in the example of the Redeemer. No instance can be produced, in which this passion appeared in him. To teach truth, and enforce duty on his hearers, was plainly the whole end proposed by him in all his instructions. Such ought to be the only end aimed at in the discourses of every Minister of the Gospel.

Finally; all persons who assemble to hear the Gospel, are here taught the manner in which they are bound to receive the truth. They are bound to receive it in *its purity and simplicity*, just as it was taught by Christ. They are bound to hear it with a reverential, ready, and obedient mind; as the law of life, and the only means of salvation. The *Jews*, who would not thus receive it, perished. Those, who at the present time will not receive it in this manner, will, unless they assume a new character, perish also.

# SERMON XLVIII.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES.

MARK xvi. 15, 16, 20.—*And he saith unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel unto every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And they went forth, and preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

IN a former discourse, I proposed to consider the prophetical character of Christ, as displayed,

1st. *In his Personal Preaching;* and,

2dly. *In his Preaching by his Apostles.*

The former of these subjects I have accordingly considered at large. The latter I shall now examine with some attention. In the text we are presented, among other things, with *a Commission*, given to his Apostles, and others, to *go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;* and with *an account of the fact*, that under this Commission *they went forth, and preached every where.* Their preaching, therefore, was a business of mere delegation, and a mere performance of a duty, enjoined by Christ. In other words, *Christ preached the Gospel by their Instrumentality.*

In the consideration of this subject, it will be proper to show,

I. *The Fact that the Apostles actually preached the Gospel of Christ; or were inspired:*

II. *The Necessity of their preaching the Gospel:*

III. *The Things which they preached:* and,

IV. *The Consequences of their preaching.*

I. *I shall endeavour to show, that the Apostles actually preached the Gospel of Christ; or were inspired.*

Many *Unitarians*, who have admitted that Christ himself was inspired, have, nevertheless, both questioned, and denied, the inspiration of his Apostles. As this is a subject of vast importance in the Christian scheme; it cannot but be necessary, in a system of Theology, to settle, as far as may be, just opinions concerning this subject. I shall, therefore, consider it at some length. It will be remembered, here, that we are not at issue with *Infidels*. The persons, with whom we contend, however unfavourable to the Scriptures their opinions on this or any other subject may seem, are yet professed believers in Divine Revelation. We are, therefore, at full liberty to bring whatever arguments we please from the Scriptures themselves. Nay, the Scriptures are, in the present case, peculiarly proper sources of evidence: sources to which our antagonists can make no objection. When Dr. *Priestly* denies what he calls *the particular inspiration* of the several books of the

Bible, he alleges, as his warrant for this denial, that *they do not pretend to any such inspiration.* Whether this doctrine is true, I shall now proceed to examine. In the

1st place, *The Commission, and the Fact, recorded in the text, prove that the Apostles were inspired.*

In the text, the Apostles are commissioned to preach the Gospel, *or good news of Salvation.* In other words, they were commissioned *to declare the terms, on which God will forgive sin, and restore sinners to his favour and blessing.* These terms it was impossible for them to know, except by means of immediate revelation to themselves, or information from a person, to whom they were revealed. The Gospel, it is agreed by all who believe it, discloses the Will of God concerning this subject. But this Will cannot be known, except by direct communication from God. The knowledge of it, therefore, must terminate, of course, in ultimate revelation. If, then, it was not revealed immediately to the Apostles, it was communicated to them, verbally, by Christ. But no power of human memory could enable them to retain such a mass of communications, for any length of time; much less for such a length of time, as intervened between their reception of them, and the publication of those writings, in which they were conveyed to the world. If we consider the numerous events in the life of Christ, which they have recorded, and still more the numerous discourses, which they have professed to recount; we must either admit, that these records are very imperfectly true, because necessarily not exact; or that the Apostles had such supernatural assistance, as to make them exact, and in this manner true. This assistance can be no other than Inspiration. The Gospel of St. *Matthew* was written, according to the earliest calculation, *eight years* after the death of Christ; that of *Mark*, and that of *Luke*, about the year 64; more than twenty years after the death of Christ; and that of *John*, to say the least, at a much later period. Nothing can be more evident, than that these writers could not, for such a length of time, retain by the mere natural force of memory the things, which they have recorded. Particularly is this impossibility manifest with respect to the numerous discourses, recorded by St. *John;* of which in so great a proportion his Gospel consists; discourses, differing from all others, ever known in the present world; strongly characteristical, and therefore fairly presumed to be genuine; discourses, raised up by events distinctly recorded, and perfectly suited to those events; composed of questions and answers, arguments and objections, so minutely specified, as to wear the appearance of having been taken down on the spot, and at the moment, with uncommon skill and felicity. He who believes, that St. *John* could have remembered these things in his old age, by the mere natural force of memory, certainly can find no difficulty in admitting any proposition, because it asserts something miraculous: for no miracle involves a more absolute counteraction of the known

laws of nature than that, which is involved in this supposition. Instead of being thus tenaciously retained, at the end of so many years, it is scarcely credible, that they could have been remembered, in the same manner, for one day.

But if the Evangelists, when professedly recording these discourses, did not record them exactly; they did not record them truly. If Christ did not say the very things, which they have asserted; their assertions are so far false; and they cannot sustain even the character, which Dr. *Priestly* concedes to them, of deserving the confidence of mankind as witnesses: for their testimony plainly cannot be true.

Beyond this, *we know beforehand*, that it is untrue: for, according to this scheme, it is not possible, that it should be true. The utmost, that can be said of it according to this scheme, is, that it may be a well meant, but must be a loose, general, and unsatisfactory account, in many, and those often important, particulars. *Necessarily untrue;* and every where, unless in some few prominent particulars, *necessarily uncertain.*

But can it be supposed, that Christ directed the Apostles to preach the Gospel in this manner? Can he be supposed to have directed them to preach it at all, if they were necessitated to preach it in this manner only? Can he, who came to publish the will of God to mankind concerning this immensely important subject, have left it to be chiefly published, under his authority, by the mere force of human memory; and mixed with human frailties and human opinions; and thus, necessarily, to have become a mass of truth and falsehood, so blended, that those who read their writings, or heard their discourses, could never be able to separate the falsehood from the truth? Does any human legislature suffer its own laws to be published in such a manner? Was Christ possessed of less wisdom, or less integrity, or less benevolence, than human Legislators? Did God give him a commission thus to act? Or did he fail to discharge the duties of the commission, which he really received?

Further; *the Evangelists have left all their declarations, in the form of unqualified, peremptory assertions.* If, then, the assertions are not true, the authors of them are false witnesses concerning Christ. They have boldly and roundly declared *that* to have been said, and done, which they did not know to have been said or done. This is no other than direct dishonesty; such as nothing can justify, or palliate. He, who directly asserts that for truth, which he does not know, or believe himself to know to be true, is a liar. The Apostles, therefore, instead of deserving credit as witnesses, must in this case be branded as liars, even with regard to the facts, in relating which, Dr. *Priestly* assures us, they are wholly to be trusted. To deserve credit in this, and to discharge the duties even of common honesty, they ought to have told us, originally, that the facts and conversations, which they were about to relate, were re-

corded by them in as faithful and exact a manner, as was in their power; but that, as they wrote from mere memory, they could give only qualified assertions; of which, although as correct as they could make them, they could not, however, be certain. In this case, they would have discharged their duty, and deserved credit. Their writings would have then claimed the title of a Revelation just as much, as any other piece of honest Biography; and no more. But the writers would have acted the part of honest men.

2dly. *This doctrine is evident from a part of the same commission, recorded by St. John.*

*Then said Jesus unto them, Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* John xx. 21—23. In this passage of Scripture, Christ tells his disciples, that he gives them generally the same mission, which the Father had given him; so that they were now to stand in his place, as ambassadors from God to this sinful world. That they might be qualified to discharge the duties of this mission, he gave, or as I conceive it ought to be understood, he promised, them the Holy Ghost; even as he had been *anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with Power*, to qualify him for the duties of the same mission.

That the reception of the Holy Ghost was indispensable to their entrance on their mission is evident from Luke xxiv. 49; where Christ, referring to this mission, says, *Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you. But tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with Power from on high.* And, again, from Acts i. 4; where St. *Luke* informs us, *that, being assembled together with them, he commanded them, that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.* That the Holy Ghost was *the promise of the Father*, or the object here promised, will not, I suppose, be questioned. If it should be, the point is unanswerably proved by the fact, that the Apostles waited in *Jerusalem*, with scrupulous obedience to this command, and did not begin to preach the Gospel at all, till, on the day of Pentecost, they actually received the Holy Ghost in the wonderful manner, described at the beginning of the following chapter. On this occasion they became in the strict sense inspired; as I shall have opportunity to evince in the sequel.

In the last verse of this quotation, Christ declares to them, *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained:* that is, *Ye shall prescribe, and publish, the terms, on which the sins of the whole human race shall be remitted or retained.* Now let me ask any sober man, whether he can possibly believe, that God placed this stupendous and amazing power in the hands of these men, and left them to exercise it, merely according to the dictates of their own discretion, and the

strength of their own memory? Was *their* understanding, or the understanding of any created being, sufficient to enable them to prescribe, and publish, the terms, obedience to which should be followed by the forgiveness of sin, and disobedience to which should prevent sin from being forgiven? Our Saviour declares, expressly, in this passage, that whose soever sins they remitted, God would remit; and whose soever sins they retained, God would retain. In other words, the very terms, which they should prescribe, as the proper foundations for the remission, or retention, of sin, would be the terms, according to which, God would remit or retain them. That this was intended in the most absolute, unqualified sense, to be fulfilled, is rendered certain by the 2d verse of the text. *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Here our Saviour declares, that he who cordially believes the Gospel, preached by the Apostles, shall have eternal life; and that he, who does not thus believe this Gospel, shall not have eternal life. It will be remembered, that the Apostles alone published the Gospel to mankind. The Gospel, as published by them, therefore, is that, which is the object of belief, here referred to by Christ: for by this Gospel only do we become acquainted with the character, mission, doctrines, precepts, or even the existence, of a Saviour. Of course, the only belief, of which Christ can be supposed to speak in this passage, is the belief of the Gospel, which *they* have published.

On the belief of this Gospel, then, Christ has made the salvation of the whole human race absolutely to depend: that is, so far as it should be published to them. Can it be supposed, that the infinitely wise and just God, who is perfectly acquainted with the weakness of the human mind; who perfectly knows, that many, very many, errors exist of course in the best and wisest men; who perfectly knew, that very many errors must in this very case be published by these men, if left to themselves; and that any number, even one, of those errors would prove fatal, not to one only, but to hundreds, and thousands, and millions, nay, to the whole body of the human race; unless he himself should ultimately forgive sin on terms not his own, and not accordant with the dictates of his own wisdom and righteousness? Can it be supposed, that the infinitely wise and just God committed to these frail, erring beings, the incomprehensibly important business of publishing, from their own judgment and memory, the terms, on which the sins of that and every succeeding age should be forgiven, or retained? Can he have said, that, after they had published such terms, as to them appeared the proper ones, *he who believed them should be saved, and he who believed them not should be damned?*

To this conclusion, however, the scheme of those, with whom I am contending, irresistibly conducts us; for the only alternative is, that Christ has here uttered an untruth. If *those, who believe* the Apostles in this case *will* not *be saved*, and *those who believe not will*

not *be damned;* if *the sins, which* THEY *remit*, in the Gospel published by them, *will* not *be remitted* by God, and *the sins, which* THEY *retain, will* not *be retained* by him; then Christ has here declared an absolute falsehood, in the most solemn and important of all cases. Of course, he may be fairly presumed to deceive in every other case; and cannot deserve the confidence of mankind in any thing. This conclusion, together with the doctrine on which it is founded, is, I suppose, too horrid to be admitted by any man, who does not regard the Scriptures with absolute contempt.

3dly. *The same truth is evident from the promise, given to the Apostles by our Saviour in his last discourses, of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them.*

The several parts of this promise, so far as they refer particularly to the point in question, are contained in the following passages.

*But the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.* John xiv. 26.

*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.* John xv. 26, 27.

*Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all* the *truth; and he shall shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* John xvi. 13, 14.

In this promise are included the following things:

1. That the Spirit would certainly come to the Apostles, after the Ascension of Christ:

2. That he would testify to them concerning Christ: *He shall testify of me:*

3. That this testimony would be accompanied by the coincident testimony of the Apostles: *and ye also shall bear witness:* &c.

4. That the Spirit of truth should receive from Christ that, which was *his;* viz. his truth, pleasure, or Gospel; and should declare it to the Apostles: *He shall receive of mine,* (of the things which are mine, Greek) *and shall declare it unto you:*

5. That *he should glorify Christ* in this communication:

6. That *he should shew* to the Apostles *things to come,* or future things: or, in other words, should endue them with the gift of prophecy:

7. That *he should guide the Apostles into all* (*the,* Greek) *truth:* that is, into all Evangelical truth; *the truth,* by way of eminence:

8. That he should teach them all things; that is, all things which they needed to be taught originally; or which Christ had not already taught them: *He shall teach you all things:*

9. That he should bring up to the full view of their memory the things, which Christ had taught them: *And shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

It will be evident to the slightest attention, that the things, here promised, contain whatever is involved in *the plenary inspiration of the Apostles*. The testimony, given by them, was a testimony concerning Christ. It glorified Christ in the highest manner conceivable. All the parts of it were exhibited by them as parts of Christ's own Gospel; and, united together, they are declared by them often, to be the Gospel of Christ. This testimony contains, also, a wonderful exhibition of their remembrance of the things, which Christ said, and did; such as must plainly be impossible, unless they had been divinely assisted. Further, it contains *all the truth:* that is, all Evangelical truth, or the whole Will of God concerning the salvation of men. Finally, it contains many wonderful predictions concerning future things, of which many have been already fulfilled in a marvellous manner.

Concerning all these things, except one, there cannot be even a debate; and that one is: That the Apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit into *all* Evangelical truth. On this I shall have occasion to say more hereafter. At present I shall confine my remarks to the promise itself. Concerning this I observe, that it either was fulfilled, or it was not fulfilled. If it was fulfilled; then the Apostles wrote, and preached, the Gospel, under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost; because the promise assures them of such inspiration in the amplest terms conceivable. If it was not fulfilled, then Christ was a false Prophet; because he promised that, which he did not fulfil.

4thly. *The same truth is evident from the testimony of the Apostles themselves.*

Dr. *Priestly*, in his letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of *France*, makes the following observation: "*That the Books of Scripture were written by particular Divine inspiration, is a thing, to which the writers themselves make no pretensions.*" I have often been astonished at this declaration; especially, as coming from a Minister of the Gospel. Whether there be any foundation for it, or not, will farther appear.

1. *They testify, that the Holy Ghost descended on them, in the same manner, and with the same effects, which Christ had promised.*

This testimony is thus summarily given: "On the day of Pentecost, while the Apostles and their companions were together, waiting for the promise of the Father, or the descent of the Holy Ghost; *a sound came from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind; and it filled the room, where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, as of fire, and sate upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" The things which they spoke are testified by those who heard them, in these words: *We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* In this story we have a direct account of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles and their compan-

ions, exactly according to the promise of Christ. We are informed, that the Holy Ghost became to them the Spirit of Inspiration; endowing them with the supernatural power of *speaking with tongues;* or languages which they had never learned; and of *speaking* in those languages *the wonderful works of God.* Accordingly, we find St. *Peter*, on this very occasion, addressing the assembly, whom this wonderful miracle had called together, *with a new Spirit*, with views of the mission of Christ, altogether new, and with an equally extraordinary knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. Nothing was more unlike his former character, in all respects, except that he was before, as well as now, a good man. Before, he had *spoken, and acted, as a child;* he had now *become a man, and put away childish things.*

Besides, we find *him*, and the other Apostles, immediately afterwards, employed, not only in preaching, in the same manner, but also in performing wonderful miracles, to prove that what they preached was the truth of God.

2. *They testify directly, that the Gospel, which they preached, was revealed to them by God.*

A few Proofs of this nature, out of a great multitude, which can be directly alleged from the New Testament, are all, which the time will allow me to recite. *In the Gospel*, says St. *Paul, the Righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation.* Romans i. 16, 17. Can either of these things be possibly said, with truth, concerning mere uninspired opinions? *We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. Now we have received, not the spirit which is of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.* Or, as the last phrase is rendered by Dr. *Macknight, explaining spiritual things in spiritual words.* In this passage the things, contained in the Gospel, are directly asserted to be revealed to the Apostles by the Spirit of God; to be the wisdom, even the hidden wisdom, of God; and to be freely given unto them of God. It is also asserted, that they had received the Spirit of God for this very end, viz. that they might know these things. Finally, it is declared, that Paul and his companions spoke these things to others, not in the words devised by human wisdom, but in words directly taught by the Holy Ghost; and that they thus explained spiritual things in words which were also spiritual; or if the common translation be preferred, comparing the spiritual things thus revealed with other spiritual things revealed in the Old Testament.

Again; *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. iii. 1. *Ministers of Christ*, here, denote those, commissioned by Christ to preach the Gospel of Christ: *Stewards of the mysteries of God*, those, who are entrusted by God with his own will, revealed by him, and otherwise hidden from mankind.

Again; *I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me was not after man*, (that is, devised by human reason) *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

*It pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen*, or Gentiles. Gal. i. 11, 12, 15, 16.

Once more; *If any man think himself to be spiritual*, (that is, a spiritual man, possessing the miraculous power of discerning spirits or doctrines) *or a prophet, let him acknowledge, that the things which I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord.* One would think, that such, as now stand in the place of these spiritual men in the Church, viz. Ministers of the Gospel, would feel themselves bound to make the same acknowledgment.

These may serve instead of near two hundred different passages, in which, in one manner and another, St. Paul asserts, explicitly, the Inspiration of himself and his Companions in the Gospel; for these decide the point, if any declarations can.

I intended to have recited declarations, to the same purpose, from the other writers of the New Testament; but, as the time is so far elapsed, I shall omit them.

3. *They declared the same thing by styling the Gospel, which they preached, the Gospel of God; and of Christ.*

Quotations to prove this fact, cannot be necessary for such, as read the New Testament. I shall therefore only observe, it proves directly, that this Gospel was revealed by God: otherwise, any other human production on the same subject might be called the Gospel of God.

4. *The importance, attached by them to the Gospel, is a full declaration that it was revealed to them.*

They declare, that it is *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; a savour of life unto life; able to make men wise to salvation; quick*, or living, *and powerful*, &c.; *piercing*, &c.; *a discerner*, &c.

They declare, that Christ *will punish with an everlasting destruction them that obey not this Gospel.*

St. Paul says, *Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.*

He further says, *if any man, or if any Angel, preach another Gospel*, (that is, another *than this* which he preached to mankind) *let him be accursed.*

He also says, *God shall judge the secrets of men*, at the final day, *according to this Gospel.*

He says also, that *God shall send* upon a portion of mankind

*strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they might all be damned, because they believed not the truth,* (that is, this very Gospel) *but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

St. *Peter*, also, styles it *the word of God; incorruptible seed;* pronounces it the means of regeneration, and eternal life; declares, that it *lives, and endures for ever;* and asserts, that *the Angels, stooping down, desire to look into it.*

Let me now ask whether all, or any one, of these things, can possibly be said concerning the mere opinions of men?

5. *The Apostles wrought innumerable miracles, to prove the truth of the Gospel.*

God only can work a miracle, and therefore he wrought these miracles. If the Gospel was not revealed to the Apostles, then it is a mere collection of human testimonies and opinions; and of course, to a considerable extent at least, is false. According to this supposition, then, God wrought miracles, to prove a mixture of false and true human opinions, incapable of being separated by man, to be true. The supposition, that God wrought miracles, to prove the truth of even just human opinions, is absurd. The supposition, that he wrought miracles to support any falsehood, is blasphemy.

To this Evidence the Apostles appeal with full confidence. The third verse of the text is such an appeal. *And they went forth, and preached every where; the Lord working with them; and confirming the word with signs following, Amen.* In the same manner St. *Paul*, Heb. ii. 3, 4, says, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him? God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.* In these two passages, the sacred writers plainly consider the miracles, wrought by the Apostles, as the testimony of the Father, and the Son, to the fact, that the Gospel, preached by them, was dictated by God, and communicated by Inspiration.

6. *The Apostles spent their lives for the Gospel.*

It is not here my intention to dwell on what the Apostles either did, or suffered. It is sufficient to observe, that they gave up, voluntarily, all earthly comforts, and hopes, and underwent, cheerfully, all the evils which can betide human life, for the sake of the Gospel. All these things they encountered, solely from confidence in Christ, his promises, doctrines, and precepts, as the source, and the means, of eternal life. All these things they terminated, also, by quietly yielding their lives to a violent and untimely death; a death, which, together with their other sufferings, was foretold to them by their Master. Thus they *esteemed all things but loss, for the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ; for whom they suffered the loss of all things: Accounting not even their lives dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry*

*which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.*

Now the Apostles knew whether Christ was what he professed himself to be, so far as his Character was an object of human observation. Particularly they knew whether his promises to them concerning their life, their supernatural endowments, their Inspiration, and the power of working miracles, were fulfilled, or not. If they were not fulfilled, they could not but know, that Christ was an Impostor; and could not have failed to give up a cause, from which nothing but evil had sprung, or could ever spring. Their perseverance is therefore complete proof, that these promises were all fulfilled: that the Holy Ghost descended on them; *guided them into all the truth; taught them all things*, pertaining to this subject; or, in the language of St. *Peter, pertaining to life and godliness; brought to their remembrance all things whatsoever Christ had said unto them; and shewed them things to come.* They have, therefore, in this manner proved, that they were inspired; so inspired as to become authoritative teachers of the Will of God concerning our salvation; and as to assure us, that whatever they have taught is true, and even in so momentous a case is to be believed, and obeyed, with final safety to our well-being.

# SERMON XLIX.

CHRIST A PROPHET.—PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES.

MARK xvi. 15, 16, 20.—*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And they went forth, and preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

IN the preceding discourse, I proposed, from these words, to consider the following subjects:

I. *The Fact that the Apostles actually preached the Gospel of Christ; or were inspired:*

II. *The Necessity of their preaching the Gospel:*

III. *The Things, which they preached:* and,

IV. *The Consequences of their preaching.*

The first of these heads I examined largely in that discourse. I shall now proceed to the consideration of the three last.

On the II. viz. *The necessity of their preaching the Gospel*, I make the following observations.

Christ in his discourse to the Apostles, recorded John xvi. says, *But when the Comforter is come, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness.* This testimony they accordingly gave to the Messiahship and universal Character of their Master, in their *oral preaching, their writings, their miracles, and their lives.* All these they uniformly attributed to *him.* Their doctrines and precepts they declared to be derived from his instructions, and the inspiration of his Spirit; their miracles from his power; and their holiness from his grace; all communicated by the same divine Agent. In his name, and under the authority of a Commission given by him, they preached, wrote, and acted, as the propagators of the Gospel, and the builders of the Church. Thus every thing which they said, or did, was a testimony, borne to Christ.

That this testimony should be thus borne by the Apostles was necessary in the divine Economy of Redemption, in the

1st place, *Because the Apostles had been with Christ from the beginning.*

It has doubtless been observed by those who hear me, that I have all along mentioned the Apostles, as if *alone* concerned in this business. It is hardly necessary to remark, that under this name I mean, here, to include their inspired Coadjutors also.

The reason which I have now alleged, is given by Christ himself; and is recited in his own words, John xvi. 27. *And ye shall bear witness also, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

The importance of this reason will be manifest, if we consider the nature of a great part of the testimony, which the Apostles have given concerning the Redeemer. This is composed partly of facts, and partly of discourses; at both of which they were present, and to which they were, of course, eye and ear witnesses. The only decisive human evidence concerning facts is the evidence of our senses, customarily called Experience. This, wherever it exists in its perfection, is universally acknowledged to be decisive. In it all other human evidence concerning facts is supposed to terminate, and, whenever it is valid, actually terminates. If, then, human testimony were to be given to the mission, character, and doctrines, of Christ; it must be indispensable, that it should rest on this kind of evidence. No other persons could be valid witnesses of the life, and miracles, of Christ, but those who saw them; nor of his discourses, but those who heard them. Accordingly, *St. Paul*, though an incontrovertible witness to the divine origin of the Gospel in many respects, was not employed to write a history of the Redeemer; while *Luke* and *Mark*, though not Apostles, were made his historians by the Spirit of God, because, as St. *Luke* says of himself, *they had perfect understanding of all things from the very first.*

It is true, that God could, if it had pleased him, have disclosed every one of the things recorded in his Gospels, to any other Person, by an original Revelation. It is not, however, the way, established in the Divine proceedings, to furnish miraculous communications, where they are not plainly necessary; or miraculous evidence, where evidence derived from other sources is sufficient. Besides, there would have been a serious imperfection attending any such Revelation, if the facts revealed had been unattested by those in whose presence they took place. The mind would instinctively have asked, why none of those who were present had testified their existence; and why no record, no valid trace of them, had been conveyed down from the beginning. It must, I think, have been impossible, or at least very difficult, to answer these questions in such a manner, as to satisfy the mind, by which they were proposed.

The importance of this evidence, in the case before us, cannot but be manifest to every one, accustomed to investigations of this nature; and peculiarly to such, as have been conversant with debates concerning the divine origin of the Gospel. Every such person knows, that, among the arguments on this subject, that, which is derived from the impossibility of the Apostles being deceived with respect to the great facts, which are the basis of the Gospel, as having been eye and ear witnesses, and witnesses competent and unexceptionable, has ever holden a primary place. Every man, versed in this subject, knows this to be an argument, which Infidels have never been able to obviate, and which, after the efforts of two centuries, as well as all those made in ancient times, remains immoveable, and beaten in vain by the billows of opposition.

2dly. *Because the Apostles survived the Ascension of Christ.*

From this circumstance many advantages were derived, of very great importance. Had Christ written the whole Gospel, that is, all which he can be supposed to have written, and written it at the only time, when he can reasonably be imagined to have written it; *not a small, nor unimportant, part of the things, pertaining to his own history and discourses, as we now find them in the Gospels properly so called, must have been lost to the world.* The account must, I think, have been closed, antecedently to the institution of the Lord's Supper: for, from the commencement of the celebration of the passover preceding it, he does not appear to have had any opportunity of writing at all. Of course, the celebration of this passover; the institution of the eucharist; his washing the disciples' feet, and his instructions on that occasion; his consolatory discourses; his intercessory prayer; his agony in the garden; the treachery of *Judas;* his trial, condemnation, death, and burial; his resurrection; his subsequent appearances to his disciples; and his final ascension to the heavens; together with all the things connected with them, could have found no place in the Gospel. But these constitute a large part of the objects of our faith, the means of our instruction, and the rules of our duty. I need not observe, that these, also, are objects of the utmost consequence to every man, who reads the Gospel; essential parts of the dispensation; without which the system would be broken and lame; without which the most important inquiries of the mind could never be satisfied; and without which the chief wants of the probationer for Eternal life could never be supplied.

Further; *Christ uttered a number of predictions, which were not fulfilled during his life, nor intended to be; but which, according to the nature of his declarations, were to be fulfilled soon after his ascension.* Among these, were his prophecies concerning the descent of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost; the success of the Apostles in preaching the Gospel; the miracles, which they were to accomplish; the sufferings, which they were to undergo; and the extensive establishment of the Church, by their preaching, among the nations of men. All these prophecies are of such a nature, that the mind of every reader would unavoidably demand an account of their fulfilment. Had no such account been given; as, if the Gospel had been finished by Christ, must have been the fact; the omission would have been perceived by every reader to be an unhappy chasm in the history of the Church which nothing could successfully fill up, and about which there would have arisen many doubts, perplexities, and distresses.

*The Christian Sabbath was adopted as a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.* The only hint concerning it, which we find given by Christ, is contained in his answer to the *Pharisees;* when they asked him, why his disciples did not fast, as did their own disciples, and those of *John the Baptist: The children of the bride-chamber cannot fast, while the bridegroom is with*

*them: but the days come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away: then shall they fast.* Christ was taken away on the evening preceding the seventh day, or Jewish Sabbath; and during the whole of that day lay buried in the tomb. On this day, then, he declares, they should fast; and in this declaration indicates, that the Jewish Sabbath should then come to an end; so far as the day was concerned, on which it was celebrated. The Sabbath is *a festival;* not *a fast:* a day of joy only, and not of sorrow. When, therefore, Christ declared, that the seventh day should be a day of fasting to his immediate disciples, he may fairly be considered, as indicating that this day should no longer be a Sabbath to *them.*

In conformity to this indication, the Apostles introduced the first day to Christians, for their future observance as the Sabbath, by their own adoption of it in their religious practice. In this manner, principally, it is announced to us in their writings, as the proper Sabbath for all the followers of the Redeemer. On the wisdom, displayed in this manner of introducing the Christian Sabbath, I design to discourse more particularly hereafter. It is sufficient to observe at the present time, that, had Christ completed the Gospel, it is not easy to see how this manner of introducing the Sabbath could have taken place; and it is evident, that this account of it could not have been given.

Finally; the whole history of the Church, contained in *the Acts of the Apostles*, would in this case, have been lost to the Christian world. No part of the Word of God is, in many respects, more filled with instruction, or consolation, than this book. The doctrines, which it contains, are of the highest importance, for their wisdom; the precepts, for their plainness and excellence; the examples, for their number, their variety, and their adaptation to the different circumstances and characters of Christians. The history of this book, also, is of the greatest value, for its edifying and instructive nature, for the satisfaction which it furnishes concerning the state of the Church at that interesting period, for the life, sufferings and deliverances, the preaching and success, of the Apostles, the opposition which they met, and the causes which produced it; the sufferings, patience, and perseverance, the errors and faults, of the first converts; the progress of Christianity, and the extension of the Church; together with a multitude of other things interwoven with these. How useful, how necessary, these things are, to instruct, edify, and comfort, every Christian, particularly every Minister, I need not explain; nor need I observe, that in a Gospel, written by our Saviour, they could have had no place.

3dly. *Because it was necessary, that the Immediate followers of Christ in the propagation of Christianity should be clearly seen to be commissioned of God.*

It will be readily acknowledged, that a body of men, so small, so uneducated, so humble, so unfriended, as the Apostles and their companions were, must have wholly failed of spreading the Gos-

pel through the world by any efforts, which they could have made, independently of peculiar assistance from Heaven. Let us inquire, then, What was the assistance, which they needed? Was it *the gift of speaking with tongues?* What purpose would this have answered, if their minds had been ignorant concerning what they were to speak; or whether that, which they were about to speak, was the will of God, and justly demanded the faith and obedience of their hearers? Was it *the Power of working miracles?* For what purpose were their miracles to be wrought? For what purpose could they be wrought? Plainly for no other, but to prove, that that, which was spoken by those who wrought them, was true. But if they were not inspired, that which they uttered was, and could at the best be, no other than the opinions, and the remembrance, of honest men. Of course, it must, necessarily, be partially false. Their miracles, therefore, would be wrought to prove the truth of falsehood; and God, if they actually wrought miracles, would set his seal to this falsehood, and employ his power to deceive their hearers. To refute this blasphemous opinion certainly cannot be necessary.

It is plain then, that no assistance could be given to them, short of Inspiration, which would at all qualify them for the diffusion of the Gospel, and the erection of Christ's kingdom in the world. The sole end of all other miraculous powers, so far as their Commission, and their employment, were concerned, was evidently to prove them inspired with a knowledge of the divine will concerning the salvation of men, and sent to declare it to their fellow-men. Independently of this great purpose, their supernatural powers were of no other use, except to amuse and astonish mankind.

In exact accordance with this scheme, St. *Paul*, in 1 Cor. xii. asserts directly the Inspiration of himself, and his companions in the ministry; and in the xiv. Chapter declares the superiority of it to all other supernatural endowments for the edification of the Church. *To one*, he says, *is given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom; to another the Word of Knowledge; by the same Spirit. To another faith; to another gifts of healing; to another the working of miracles; to another the discerning of spirits, or doctrines.* In the 31st verse he directs them to *covet earnestly the best gifts.* In the 39th verse of the 14th chapter, he says, *Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophecy*, that is, to declare the will of God by inspiration, *and forbid not to speak with tongues. Greater*, he says, *is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues.* And again, *Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by Revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?* All these are only different words to express that Inspiration, by which they either originally received, or unerringly understood, proposed, explained, or enforced, divine truth. Without this, he declares expressly, that he should not profit the Church in its spiritual concerns at all.

Accordingly, after having directed them to *covet earnestly the best gifts*, he further directs them to *covet the gift of prophesying*, and *not forbid speaking with tongues:* as much as to say, "Covet to receive from God, by Revelation, divine truth; and the gifts of unerringly explaining, declaring, and enforcing, it to others; as being things of supreme importance and usefulness: at the same time, forbid not to speak with tongues; as being an endowment, really, though very subordinately useful."

From these passages I think it is unanswerably evident, that *a Revelation*, such as Dr. *Priestly*, without meaning, calls *particular*, existed in a standing manner in the minds of *the Apostles* and *their companions;* in *the latter* to direct them in their preaching; in *the former*, for the same purpose, and the still more important one of committing the Word of God to writing, for the instruction of all succeeding generations. So extensive, and common, was this Revelation, as to be made the proper subject of a system of directions from St. *Paul* to the *Corinthian* Church: a thing wholly inexplicable, if this fact had not existed.

From these observations it is plain, that without inspiration all the other supernatural endowments of the Apostles must, if given, have been given to no valuable end; that, on the contrary, they would only have served to establish falsehood and delusion; and that unless they were inspired, it may certainly be concluded, that they were in no other respect supernaturally endowed. Their inspiration, therefore, was absolutely necessary to prove their commission to be from God.

If it had not been made evident, that the Apostles were commissioned from God, this fact must, I think, have been fatal to the cause of Christianity. In this case, although we might have acknowledged Christ to be a divine Missionary; yet we should naturally and unanswerably have said, "What authority did these men possess to transmit his instructions and precepts to us? What proof have we, that they understood them; remembered them; or expressed them with correctness and certainty? Why are we bound to regard what they have said, any more than the numerous Gospels written by others? Christ wrote nothing. Had he intended to require our Faith and Obedience to his precepts, he would undoubtedly have taken effectual care, that we should receive them in such a manner, and from such persons, as would assure us, that they were his, and only his."

To *us*, it ought to be observed, the Inspiration of the Apostles furnishes a proof, that they were commissioned from God, which is additional to the proofs, given to those who heard them preach. In their writings they have left on record a number of important prophecies. Several of these have been remarkably fulfilled; and others are daily receiving their fulfilment. In the fulfilment of these prophecies we have a direct proof of their Inspiration, and consequently of their divine commission, which is immoveable, and

which could not, in the same degree, be discerned by their cotemporaries.

4thly. *Because many preachers were necessary for such an extensive establishment of the Church, as that which actually took place; the great body of whom needed, for a time, to sustain the same character.*

On this subject it will not be necessary to dwell. If the preceding arguments be allowed to prove the point, for which they were alleged, it will undoubtedly be also conceded, that Inspiration was as necessary for some, at least, of those, who preached in one place, as for any, who preached in another. It may, perhaps, be objected, that this is proving too much; and alleging inspiration in a wider extent than has hitherto been pretended.

To prevent any misconceptions on this point, I will state my own views of this subject, a little more particularly than I have hitherto done. The inspiration of the Apostles I suppose to have consisted in the following things.

1. *That they received immediately from God every part of the Christian dispensation, which they did not know by other means.*

2. *That in the same manner they were furnished with a foreknowledge of future events.*

3. *That in things which they did otherwise know partially, the deficiencies of their knowledge were in the same manner supplied.*

4. *That those things which they had once known, and which were parts of the Christian dispensation, were by divine Power brought distinctly, and fully to their remembrance.*

5. *That they were directed by the Holy Spirit to the selection of just such things, and such only, and to precisely such a manner of exhibiting them, as should be true, just, most useful to mankind, and most agreeable to the Divine wisdom.*

6. *That each one was left so far to his own manner of writing, or speaking, as that the style was strictly his own; and yet that the phraseology, used by him in this very style, was so directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit, as to lead him to the most exact and useful exhibition of Divine truth: his own words being, in this important sense, words not devised by human wisdom, but taught by the Holy Ghost.* And,

7. *That each inspired man was, as to his preaching, or his writing, absolutely preserved from error.*

All these particulars cannot be applied in the same degree, and some of them cannot be applied at all, to *all* the inspired Preachers. But, in my own view, every such Preacher enjoyed the benefits of Inspiration so far, as he needed them to enable him to preach the Gospel truly, and usefully, to mankind; so far, as to preserve him from false narratives, erroneous doctrines, and unsound, or useless precepts. That this was equally necessary for every preacher, before the written Canon furnished mankind with an unerring standard, with which they might compare the things which were preach-

ed to them, so as to determine their soundness or unsoundness, will, I suppose, be granted by all those, who acknowledge the necessity of Inspiration to any preacher.

5thly. *Because it was necessary that Christ should appear to act, and to control the affairs of his Church, after his Ascension.*

The Apostles preached, wrought miracles, spoke with tongues, and executed all the parts of their ministry, under the authority, in the name, and by the power, of Christ. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth I command thee to arise and walk. Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. Christ, having received the promise of the Father, hath shed forth this, which ye see and hear. If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ.* This is the language, which, in substance, the Apostles use on every occasion, when the subject comes into view. At the same time, they inform us, that their commission was given them by Christ; and that in his name, and by his mission, and in no sense of themselves, they went forth to preach the Gospel, and to evince its divine origin by miracles. The power by which they acted in all their wonderful works, the wisdom which they preached, and the grace by which they were sanctified and sustained, they ascribe wholly to him. Beyond this, they declare, that, while he resided in this world, he promised them all these things; and that he continually and exactly, fulfilled this promise. His presence with them on various occasions, whenever it was demanded by their circumstances, and his interference on their behalf, whenever it was necessary, they testify in the amplest and most decisive manner. Thus, in every thing which they taught, or did, He is the fountain whence every stream proceeded. He, according to their own declarations, is the Agent; and they are merely instruments in his hand.

But this agency of Christ on earth, after he had ascended to the heavens, is a most important, indispensable, and glorious part of his character; important and indispensable to mankind, and glorious to himself. Evidence is furnished by it to prove, that he is in all places, and beholds all things; that he is faithful to perform every thing, which he has promised, and able to do every thing, which Christians need; which no Unitarian, hitherto, has had sufficient ingenuity to answer, or avoid. We see him actually exemplifying in his conduct all these things to his early followers; and are therefore certainly assured, that, so far as our necessities require, he will substantially exhibit them to us. Christians in all ages, succeeding that of the Apostles, are here furnished with the strongest proofs, that *He* possesses all those attributes, on which their hope may most securely repose; and the most lively incitements to centre in him their evangelical confidence.

6thly. *Because the Gospel, in its present form, is far more useful to mankind, than if it had been written by one person, on one*

*occasion, and in one manner.* By *the Gospel*, here, I mean *the whole New Testament.* Christ, I acknowledge, could have written it, if he had pleased, in the very form, nay, in the very words, in which it is now written. But it would have been a plain and gross absurdity for Christ to have written *a history*, such as *the Acts of the Apostles*, or such as that of *the events immediately preceding and succeeding his own death*, concerning facts which had not yet happened; *or Epistles* to Churches not yet in being, concerning business, duties, and dangers, of which no vestige had hitherto appeared to have existed. It is not, therefore, irreverent, or improper, to say, that Christ could not, so far as we can conceive, have written the New Testament in its present form, without palpable improprieties, inwoven in the very nature of the work.

In its present form, the Gospel is far more useful, than it would have been, if written in the manner which I have supposed, in many respects. It is in a much greater degree composed of *facts*; unless, indeed, the same facts had been communicated in prediction. In *the historical form*, in which they now appear, they are much more easily and strongly realized; more readily believed; more capable of being substantiated by evidence; and more powerfully felt; than if they had been only predicted. *The Epistles* are also, in a great proportion of instances, written on subjects of real business; and for that reason are more easily proved to be genuine; are far more interesting, and far more instructive, than would otherwise have been possible. Their different dates continue the indubitable history of the Church through a considerable period: and furnish us with a number of very important facts, which we could not otherwise obtain. Their direction to Churches in different countries presents us, also, with the extension, and state, of the Church, in different parts of the world, at that time. The business, concerning which they were written, occasions a display of the difficulties, doubts, errors, temptations, controversies, and backslidings; the faith, comforts, hopes, repentance, brotherly love, piety, and general excellence, of the Christians, to whom they were addressed. These are the peculiarly interesting circumstances of all other Christians. The instructions, therefore, the exhortations, commands, reproofs, encouragements, and consolations, addressed to these Churches, are to all other Christians, as to them, the very best means of reformation, improvement, and comfort.

*The examples of the Apostles*, which in a Gospel, completed by Christ, could not have been recorded, are among the most edifying, as well as most interesting, parts of the sacred Canon.

*The variety of form and manner*, now introduced into the New Testament, is attended with peculiar advantages. It renders the Scriptures far more *pleasing*. A greater number of persons will read them. All, who read them, will read them oftener, and will more deeply feel their contents. It renders them far more *instructive*. In consequence

of the various application of the doctrines and precepts to so many different concerns of mankind, clearer views are given of their extent, and comprehensiveness. By a comparison also of the different passages, thus written, with each other, as they are thus written with a various reference and application, new truths are obviously, as well as certainly, inferred from them, almost without any limitation of their number. The truths, also, which are thus inferred, are always important, and frequently of very great importance. By this variety of manner, application, and inference, the Scriptures are always new, improving, and delightful; and exhibit incontrovertible evidence of Divine wisdom in the manner, in which God has directed them to be written, as well as in the wonderful and glorious things, which they contain.

I have now finished this interesting head of my discourse; and shall proceed to the consideration of the two remaining ones; which, respecting subjects generally understood, will demand our attention but a few moments.

*The* III. *subject proposed, was the Things, which the Apostles preached.*

On this I observe in the

1st. place. *The Apostles have written the whole New Testament; both the things which were said, and done, by Christ, and the things which were said, and done, by themselves.*

2dly. *They have either originally communicated, or materially explained, many doctrines and precepts, which were either omitted, or partially communicated, by Christ.*

Among these I select the following.

The connexion which runs through the whole system of Redemption; the patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations; their mutual dependence; the absolute dependence of all on Christ; and the sameness of the manner and principles of salvation in all the extent of the curse, and the unhappy efficacy of the Apostacy of our first parents; the parallelism between the first and second *Adam*, and between the ruin and recovery of mankind; the imperfection of the *Sinaitic* covenant; the superior glory and blessings of the covenant of grace; the priesthood of Christ, formed after the order of *Melchisedek;* his Government of the world, for the benefit of the Church; his intercession in behalf of his followers, before the throne of God; the preaching of the Gospel to *Abraham*, and to the *Israelites;* Justification by the grace of God through faith in the righteousness of Christ, founded on that righteousness as its meritorious cause; the sameness of *Abraham's* justification with that of all other saints, both before and after the coming of Christ; the sameness of the religion of the Old and New Testament; the extension of the Mediation of Christ, not only to the *Jews* but to all mankind; the nature of Evangelical faith; the nature of Evangelical love; the progressive sanctification of Christians by the Holy Ghost; the difficulties of the Chris-

tian warfare, and the struggle between sin and holiness in the sanctified mind; the nature and circumstances of the resurrection; the process of the final judgment; the conflagration of the earth and visible heavens; the worship rendered to Christ in the heavenly world; and his peculiar agency in administering to his followers the happiness of a glorious immortality. These, together with a train of important prophecies, concerning the affairs of the Church throughout every age of the Christian Dispensation, the Apostles have added to the other contents of the Scriptures, or more perfectly explained them to mankind.

IV. *The Consequences of their preaching.*

1st. *The Apostles, and their converts, were furiously persecuted, soon after they had begun to preach the Gospel; particularly by the Jews; and not long after by the Gentiles also.*

This subject is too well known to need a discussion from me. It is extensively recorded in the New Testament, and largely insisted on in Ecclesiastical history.

2dly. *The Apostles preached the Gospel with wonderful success.*

Beside the many thousand converts, whom they made among the Jews, they spread the Gospel from *Hindoostan to Gaul;* and planted Churches throughout a great part of the *Roman* Empire, in *Persia*, *Hindoostan*, and several other Countries. The number of their disciples in these extensive regions was immensely great; and this vast wilderness was made to blossom as the garden of God.

Exclusively of the residence of Christ in the world, nothing has ever taken place among mankind, so wonderful and glorious, as this event; nothing more unlike the ordinary progress of things; nothing more declarative of the presence and agency of God; nothing more evincive of the reality of Revelation. Whether we consider the religion to which mankind were converted; the difficulty of producing a real reformation in the human heart; the original character of the converts; the bigotry of the *Jews;* the ignorance and wickedness of the Gentiles; the vastness, uniformity, and enduring nature, of the change; or the seeming insignificance of the instruments by which it was wrought; fishermen, publicans, and tent-makers; few, feeble, friendless, despised, persecuted, and in many instances, put to a violent death; we are astonished and lost. A thorough discussion of the importance of this fact; the success of the Gospel; might easily and usefully fill a volume, but cannot be pursued at the present time. It has been a theme of exultation and joy to all succeeding ages of the Church; and, as we have the best reason to conclude, of peculiar wonder and transport in the world above.

The *evidence*, which it furnishes to the divine origin of the Gospel, is immoveable; and has accordingly been always insisted on by Christians with superiority and triumph. Infidels have laboured to diminish and obscure it with extreme earnestness and assidui-

ty; but they have laboured in vain. *Gibbon*, particularly, with much art, a malignant hostility to the Christian cause, and the most strenuous exertion of his talents, has struggled hard to account for this event by assigning it to other causes than the true one. The real effect of his labours has, however, been to leave the evidence of the inspiration of the Apostles more clear, more convincing, and more unexceptionable, than it was before.

# SERMON L.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—ORIGIN, OFFICE, AND CHARACTER OF THE PRIESTHOOD.—PROOFS OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

PSALM CX. 4.—*The* LORD *hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek*

IN a series of discourses, I have considered *the Prophetical character of Christ.* I shall now proceed, according to the plan, originally proposed for the investigation of his office as Mediator between God and Man, to consider his Priesthood.

In order to a proper examination of this subject, it will be useful to examine summarily,

1st. *The Origin,*

2dly. *The Office,* and,

3dly. *The Character, of a Priest;* and,

Afterward, *to inquire in what manner, the office and character of a Priest may be said to belong to Christ.*

I. *The office of a Priest undoubtedly had its origin in the first ages of the world.* The earliest mention, made of this subject in form, is found in *Genesis* xiv. 18, *And Melchisedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the Priest of the most High God.* The office was, however, in being long before this period. *Cain and Abel* performed the public duties of it for themselves; and there is no reason to doubt, that it was regularly continued from their time through every succeeding period, to the coming of Christ.

So soon as mankind became distributed into families, it appears highly probable, that the Father of the family exercised this office in all instances, in behalf of himself and his household. Several instances of this nature are recorded: *Noah* was plainly the Priest of his own family, and *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,* and *Job,* of theirs. It is probable, that heads of families, *generally,* held the office in the same manner.

When mankind became settled in tribes and nations, the prince or chief ruler, and at times some other ruler of great distinction, became the priest of the nation. Thus *Melchisedek* was at the same time the King and Priest of the people of *Salem;* and thus, as we know from profane history, many other princes held the same office among the people, over whom they presided.

Under the *Mosaic* economy, the office was by divine institution, appropriated to a particular class of men. All these, except one, were, originally, ordinary priests; over whom, that one presided,

in the character of High Priest. To this officer peculiar duties and privileges were attached. His weight and influence were almost invariably second only to those of the Prince, and not unfrequently paramount even to *them*. Similar establishments were early made among the Gentiles. In the time of *Joseph*, we find the Priests a separate class of men in the land of *Egypt*. An institution, essentially of the same nature, appears to have existed in many other nations at a very early date; and a Priesthood in one form, or another, has been found in almost all the nations of men, in every age of the world. This fact proves unanswerably, that the priesthood has its origin either in a Divine appointment, handed down by universal tradition, or in such a sense, felt by the human mind, of its utility and importance, as to persuade all nations, for this reason, not only to institute, but to maintain it, with great expense and self-denial. As we find the office commencing with the very first age of the world; we are furnished by this fact with a strong presumptive argument, to prove that it was derived, originally, from a divine institution. This argument receives no small strength from the consideration, that the office, however corrupted and mutilated, was, in substance, every where the same; and was professedly directed to the same objects.

II. *The Office of a Priest involved the following things.*

1st. *Intercession.*

This is so universally acknowledged to have been always a part of the duties of a Priest, as to need neither proof nor explanation. In conformity to it *Aaron and his sons* were commanded to bless the children of *Israel*, by praying for them in this remarkable language. JEHOVAH *bless thee, and keep thee.* JEHOVAH *make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee!* JEHOVAH *lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace!* In the same manner also, in the days of the Prophet *Joel*, *the Priests, the ministers of the Lord* were commanded to *weep between the porch and the altar, and to say, Spare thy people, O Lord! and give not thine heritage to reproach! that the heathen should rule over them! Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?*

Among the *Gentiles*, also, Priests customarily prayed for the people.

2dly. *Another branch of the Priest's office was the offering of sacrifices and other oblations.*

*Every high Priest, taken from among men*, says St. *Paul, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.* Intercession seems to be a duty of natural religion, and may be easily supposed to be a service, properly performed by beings, who have not fallen from their obedience. But, in such a state, the offering of sacrifices could evidently have no propriety, nor foundation. Sacrifices are, in my view, beyond all doubt, of Divine appointment, and have their foundation in the apostacy of man. Of this the proof seems to me

complete, both from reason and Revelation. It cannot be supposed, as it cannot be proper, that on this occasion I should enter upon a detailed account of this proof. It will be sufficient to observe, that sacrifices existed among all the ancient nations, and that therefore they are derived from one common source; that no nation, beside the Jews, can give any account of the origin of this rite, or any reason for which it was founded; nor show, unless loosely and unsatisfactorily, any purpose, which it could rationally be expected to answer: that all nations still hoped by means of their sacrifices to become acceptable, though they could not tell how, or why, to their Gods; and accordingly made the offering of sacrifices the principal rite of their respective religions: that, to a great extent, they offered the same sacrifices; and those chiefly such, as are styled *clean*, in the Scriptures. These sacrifices were, also, esteemed in some sense or other, though none of the heathen could explain that sense, expiations for sin. At the same time, it ought to be observed, that there is, to the eye of reason, no perceptible connexion between sacrifices and religion; and that there is nothing in this rite, particularly, which can lead the understanding to suppose it in any sense expiatory. The true dictate of reason on this subject is, that the causeless destruction of the life of an animal must be in itself an evil; an act of inhumanity; a provocation to God; only increasing the list of crimes in the suppliant: while, on the contrary, the supposition that God can be appeased, or reconciled, by the death of an animal, burnt upon an altar, is an obvious and monstrous absurdity. Well might *Balak* doubt, when he asked so anxiously, under the strong influence of traditionary custom, *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? The* only *sacrifices of God;* that is, the only sacrifices, which God will accept, if he will accept any from man; are in the eye of common sense, as well as in that of *David, a broken spirit and a contrite heart;* a disposition, as specified by *Balaam* in his answer to *Balak, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.* From these observations, taken in their connexion, it is, I think, fairly evident, that sacrifices were not, and cannot have been, devised by mankind.

In the Scriptures the same doctrine is, I apprehend, rendered unquestionably certain. *Abel* offered a sacrifice to God, and was accepted. By St. *Paul* we are informed, that he offered this sacrifice in faith. While it is incredible, that he should have *devised* this rite as an act of religion, it is anti-scriptural, and therefore incredible, that he should have been accepted in any act, beside an act of obedience to God. But such an act, his sacrifice could not have been, unless it had been commanded of God. Nor is it possible to conceive in what manner his faith could have been exerted, or to what object it could have been directed, unless it was

directed to some divine promise. But no divine promise is, in the Scriptures, exhibited as made to mankind, except through the Redeemer. *Abel*, therefore, must have believed in the future existence, and efficacious interference, of that *Seed of the Woman, which was* one day *to bruise the head of the Serpent.* With the eye of faith he saw, that through this glorious person there was *forgiveness with God*, and therefore *feared*, or reverenced him. He *hoped* in the divine promise that through him *there was plenteous redemption* for the children of men; and in the exercise of this hope he performed such acts of worship as God had enjoined. Had he, on the contrary, like *Nadab* and *Abihu*, brought an offering *which the Lord had not commanded*, we are warranted from analogy to conclude, that he would have been rejected, as *they* were.

After the deluge, *Noah*, as we are told, *builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar.* On this occasion, also, the offering was accepted. To this fact the same reasoning is applicable with the same force. But it is further evident from this story, *that both fowls and beasts, were, at that time, known, and designated, as clean, and unclean.* That this designation existed in the time of *Noah*, and was customary language, known to him and others at that time, is certain, from the fact, that he selected only such as were clean; and is still further illustrated by the fact, that God directed him *to take of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, by sevens, into the ark;* and that *Noah* exactly obeyed this command, and therefore perfectly knew what it imported. Beasts and fowls were, of course, distinguished as clean and unclean; or, in other words, as those which might, and those which might not, be offered to God. But beasts, in themselves, are all equally clean, and equally unclean: nor can common sense discern a reason, why one should be offered rather than another, any more, than why any of them should be offered at all. The distinction of clean and unclean, or acceptable and unacceptable, cannot have been founded in any thing, but the divine appointment. But this distinction we find thus early made: and, as *Abel* offered clean beasts also, and the firstlings of his flock; the very sacrifice commanded afterwards to the Israelites; there is ample reason to conclude, that the same distinction was made from the beginning.

The sacrifices of the Scriptures involve a plain, and at the same time a most important, meaning. All of them were typical merely; and declared in the most striking manner the faith of the worshipper in the great propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer, and in the blessings promised by God through his mediation. Considered in this light, sacrifices are highly significant acts of worship; worthy of being divinely instituted; deeply affecting the heart of the suppliant: naturally and strongly edifying him in faith, hope, and obe-

dience; and well deserving a place among the most important religious rites of all, who lived before the oblation of the great Sacrifice, made for mankind.

From this view of the subject, it is, I think, clearly evident, that sacrifices were divinely instituted; and that this institution was founded in the future propitiatory sacrifice for sin, made by the Redeemer. It is, of course, evident also, that this part of the priest's office is derived from the apostacy of mankind; and can have a place, only among beings who need an expiation.

3dly. *Another part of the Priest's office was to deliver the oracles, or answers of God to the people.*

This was done, partly by the now inexplicable mode of *Urim* and *Thummim*, and partly by declarations, made in the common manner.

The heathen priesthood, in imitation of that which was instituted by God, gave the pretended answers of their oracular Divinities to such as came to consult them.

4thly. *Another part of the Priest's office was deciding the legal controversies of individuals, or judging between man and man.*

For the institution of this duty of the Priests, see Deuteronomy xvii. 9, 10. Accordingly, several of the priests are mentioned in succeeding ages, as judges of the people.

5thly. *Another part of the Priest's office was to instruct the people in the knowledge of the divine Law.*

*The priest's lips*, says *Malachi, should keep knowledge; and they should seek the Law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.*

Of all the parts of this Office the offering of Sacrifices and other Oblations is undoubtedly the most prominent and important. It was originally enjoined in the authoritative separation of *Aaron and his sons* to the priesthood. It is every where more insisted on as the great business of the priests, throughout the Law of *Moses*, and throughout the whole history of the *Jewish* Economy. It is accordingly mentioned, *alone*, by St. Paul in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, chapter v. verse 1, as the sum of the duty of the High Priest. *Every high priest—is ordained—that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.* This, then, is the peculiar Office, or duty, of the Priesthood; while the others are only appendages.

In the performance of this duty, the priest was every where considered in the Law of *Moses*, as making an atonement for the sins of the person, or persons, by whom the offerings were presented: sometimes for individuals; sometimes for the whole nation. This great object, the only rational means of explaining the institution of sacrifices, is abundantly inculcated in the formal institution itself, and in all the precepts, by which the duties of it are regulated; so abundantly, that I know not how it can be misconstrued. Accordingly, the Scriptures have been understood in this manner only by the great body of Christians, from the beginning.

But nothing is more evident, than that *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins.* These sacrifices, therefore, were never designed to purify those, by whom they were offered. They were plainly, and certainly, mere types, holding forth to the suppliant the great and real sacrifice, by which the Author of it *hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin*, God said by *David*, Psalm xl. *he had no pleasure.* They were not, therefore, ordained for their own sake; but to point the eyes of worshippers to the Son of God, who *came to do his will; for whom a body was prepared;* and who, *having offered*, in that body, *one sacrifice for sins, sate down for ever at the right hand of God.*

The scheme of Atonement, then, appears evidently to have been a part, and a chief part, of the divine Economy in the present world, in all ages, or from the beginning.

Accordingly, when Christ had performed this great duty of his own priesthood, the priesthood of men ceased. The *Jewish* priesthood was terminated within a few years after his Ascension. The Office, except as holden by Christ, has no place in the Christian Church; and, unless in a figurative sense, cannot be applied to Christian Ministers without a solecism.

III. *The Character of a Priest, as disclosed in the Scriptures, consisted principally of the following things.*

1st. *A Priest must be called of God.*

*No man*, says *St. Paul, taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.* Nothing is more plain, than that he who ministers to God in divine things, ought to be approved of God; and it is clearly evident, that he who is not called, cannot expect to be approved. To thrust one's self into an office of this nature must be the result of mere impudence and impiety: a spirit, which cannot meet the divine acceptance.

2dly. *A Priest must be holy.*

*Aaron and his sons* were originally sanctified, externally, by a series of most solemn offerings and ceremonies. The *Garments* of the High Priest were also pronounced holy, and styled holy garments. The *oil*, with which he was anointed, was styled holy; and was forbidden to all other persons, on a severe and dreadful penalty. HOLINESS TO THE LORD was engraved on a plate, which he was directed to wear upon his mitre.

*Such an high priest*, says St. *Paul, became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.*

No absurdity can be more obvious, or more gross, than an unholy, polluted character in a man, whose professional business it is to minister to God. The very Heathen were so sensible of this, that their priests claimed generally, and laboured to preserve that character, which they esteemed sanctity.

3dly. *A Priest must be learned in the Scriptures.*

As the Priests were to *teach*, so they were to *keep*, *knowledge*. *Ezra*, accordingly, is declared to have been *a ready Scribe in the Law of Moses; and to have prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgment.* *Artaxerxes*, also, in his decree testifies, that *the wisdom of God was in the hand of Ezra.* Every priest was implicitly required to possess these three great characteristics of the Priesthood.

I have discussed the preceding subjects, viz. *The origin, The office, and the character of the Priesthood*, that the various observations, which I shall have occasion to make in the further examination of the Priesthood of Christ, may be the more distinctly understood.

*I shall now inquire in what manner the office and character of a Priest may with propriety be said to belong to him.*

In the text, God the Father is exhibited as having sworn with a solemn and unchangeable decree to his Son, *Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.* As the person to whom this oath was addressed, is expressly declared both by Christ and St. *Paul* to be Christ; there can be no debate concerning this part of the subject.

Further; as Christ is here declared by God the Father to be a priest, it cannot be questioned, that he sustained this office. It may, however, be proper to remind those who hear me and who wish to examine the Scriptural account of this subject, that the establishment and explanation of the priesthood of Christ occupies a great part of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*.

But, although this fact cannot be questioned; it cannot easily fail to be a useful employment in a Christian assembly, to show, that Christ actually sustained the whole character, and performed all the duties of a priest of God. This purpose I shall endeavour to accomplish in the remainder of the present discourse.

1st. *Christ sustained the whole character of a Priest of God.*

*He was called of God to this office.* Of this the proof is complete in the passage already quoted, from Hebrews v. 4, 5. *No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son; to-day have I begotten thee.* In the following verse, the Apostle with unanswerable force alleges the text, as complete proof of the same point. *As he saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.* In the 9th and 10th verses, also, he renews the declaration in a different form, from the same words: *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedek.* In consequence of this divine call to the priesthood, he was anointed to this office, not with the holy anointing oil, employed in the solemn consecration of the *Aaronic* priesthood, but

with the antitype of that oil; the Spirit of grace, poured upon him *without measure* by the hand of God.

*He was holy. Such an high priest*, says St. *Paul, became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Who did no sin*, says St. *Peter, neither was guile found in his mouth. The prince of this world cometh*, says our Saviour, *and has nothing in me:* that is, *nothing, on which he can found an accusation against me.*

*He was perfectly acquainted with the Law of God.* This is abundantly declared by Christ himself in many forms; particularly, when he says, *For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things, whatsoever he doeth.* And again; *No one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he, to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.** And again, *I am the light of the world.*† And again, *Thy Law is within my heart.*‡ Of this acquaintance with the divine Law he gave the most abundant proofs, while he resided in this world, in his discourses generally. But in his sermon on the Mount he gave a more clear, minute, and comprehensive explanation of its nature, and extent, than was ever furnished, elsewhere, to the children of men.

2dly. *He performed all the duties of a Priest of God, except one; to wit, determining judicially the controversies between men; a thing irreconcileable to his office as a Priest.*

*He taught the Law, or will of God to his people, and ultimately to mankind*, in a manner far more extensive, perspicuous, forcible, and every way perfect, than all the priests, and all the prophets, who preceded him, had been able to do. On this subject I have dwelt, while considering his character as a Prophet, with so much minuteness, as to preclude all necessity of further discussion.

In this instruction he has included *all things pertaining to life and to Godliness*, necessary to be known by man; and, therefore, has involved in them every *oracular answer*, or *answer of God to the inquiries of mankind after their interest and duty*, which they can ever need, on this side of the grave.

*He has performed, and still performs, for this sinful world, the great office of an Intercessor.*

*But this man* (says St. *Paul*) *because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood. Wherefore he is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. If any man sins*, says St. *John, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Of this Intercession his prayer, in the 17th Chapter of *John*, has been considered as an example.

Finally; *He performed the great duty of offering sacrifice. Who needeth not daily, as those high Priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once,*

* Matt. xi. 28. † John ix. 5. ‡ Psalm xl. 8.

*when he offered up himself.* And again: *Now, once in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And, as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; So Christ was once offered, to bear the sins of many.* It will be unnecessary farther to multiply proofs of this point.

It may, however, be useful to obviate a difficulty, which may not very unnaturally, arise in the mind, when contemplating this subject. It is this.

*How can Christ be said to have offered himself, when he was apprehended, condemned, and crucified, by others?* This difficulty will be easily removed, if we remember the following things.

1st. *That Christ could not, without incurring the guilt of suicide, have put himself to death. And, therefore, could not be virtuously offered, on his own part, unless put to death by the hand of others:*

2dly. *That he voluntarily came into the world, to die for sinners:*

3dly. *That he predicted his own death, and therefore certainly foreknew it:* and,

4thly. *That he could, with perfect ease, have resisted, and overcome his enemies; as he proved unanswerably by his miracles; and particularly by compelling, through the awe of his presence, those very enemies to fall backward to the ground, at the time when they first attempted to take him.* From these things it is evident, beyond a debate, that he himself *made his soul an offering for sin;* and of himself *laid down his life, and took it up again, when none could take it out of his hand.*

From these considerations it is evident, that Christ was, in the most proper sense, a priest of God; and that he sustained all the characteristics, and performed all the duties, belonging to the priesthood: particularly, that he was called of God, consecrated, and anointed, to this office; and that he performed the great duty of offering sacrifice, for which the office was especially instituted.

Let me now ask, whether these things, so strongly and abundantly declared in the Scriptures, can be made, in any sense, to accord with the Unitarian doctrine: *that Christ died merely as a witness to the truth of his declarations.* Every Christian Martyr, as his name sufficiently indicates, yielded his life as a testimony to the truth. But was every Christian Martyr therefore a Priest of God? Did every Martyr offer sacrifice? Was St. *Paul* a Priest; or St. *Peter?* They were both witnesses to the truth; and voluntarily gave up their lives as a testimony to the truth. But did they, therefore, offer sacrifice? Were they, therefore, Priests? Did any man ever think of applying to them language of this nature?

But, further, Christ is expressly, and often, declared *to have offered himself a sacrifice for* SINS.

For whose sins did he offer this sacrifice? Not for his own: for *he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* For the sins of others, then, was this offering made. According to the declaration of St. *Peter, He bore* OUR *sins in his own body on the tree.* His sac-

rifice of himself was, therefore, an Atonement, and Expiation, of the sins of mankind.

Thus from the nature, origin, and institution, of the Priest's Office, it is evident, that Christ, the great High Priest of our profession, became, by the execution of his Official duties, (if I may call them such) *a propitiation for the sins of the world.* So far is the Unitarian doctrine on this subject from being countenanced by the Scriptural representations, that it is a direct contradiction of every thing said in the Scriptures concerning the priesthood, and particularly that of Christ.

On this subject I propose to insist more at large hereafter: but I thought it useful to show, at the introduction of it into a system of Theology, that it was essential to the very nature of the Priest's Office. Nor can I fail to wonder, how any man, reading the accounts given of it in the Bible, should adopt any other opinion concerning this part of the Mediation of the Redeemer.

# SERMON LI.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS HOLINESS OF CHARACTER.

HEBREWS vii. 26.—*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*

IN the preceding discourse, I considered *the Origin, Office, and Character, of the Priesthood;* and showed *that this office,* in the strictest sense, *belonged to Christ;* and that the end of its establishment in the world was no other, than to hold out to the view of the ancients the priesthood of the Redeemer.

Among the characteristics of a Priest, I mentioned it as an indispensable one, *that he should be holy.* This characteristic of the Redeemer I shall now make the subject of consideration; and in discussing it shall

I. *Mention several particulars, in which this attribute was exemplified;* and,

II. *Explain its importance.*

I. *I shall mention several particulars, in which this attribute of Christ was exemplified.*

In the text, the Apostle declares, that Christ *was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.* The word, *holy,* in this passage, naturally denotes *the positive excellence of Christ's character:* the word, *harmless, an absolute freedom from the guilt of injuring and corrupting others:* the word, *undefiled, his freedom from all personal corruption:* and the phrase, *separate,* or separated, *from sinners, the entire distinction between him, and all beings who are, in any sense, or degree, the subjects of sin.* The character, here given of Christ by the Apostle, includes, therefore, all the perfection, of which, as an intelligent being, the Saviour was capable. It ought to be remarked, that *this character is given of him as a Priest;* and, of course, belongs especially to him, as exercising this part of his Mediatorial office.

It will be obvious to a person, examining this subject with a very moderate degree of attention, that Christ, in order to sustain this character, must have fulfilled all the duties, enjoined on him by the positive precepts of the divine law, and have abstained from every transgression of the negative ones; that in thought, word, and action, alike, he must have been uniformly obedient to the commands of God; that his obedience must have been rendered in that exact and perfect degree, in which it was required by those commands; and that it must have included, in the same perfect manner, all the duties which he owed immediately to God.

to mankind, and to himself: in other words, that his virtue, or moral excellence, must have been consummate.

That such was, in fact, the character of Christ, we have the most abundant testimony.

The Scriptures declare every part of this character. St. *Peter* asserts directly, that *he did no sin;* that *guile was not found in his mouth;* and styles him *a Lamb without blemish, and without spot.* He calls him *The holy one, and the just;* and declares, that *he went about doing good.* St. *Paul* declares, that *He knew no sin.* St. *John* declares, that *in him was no sin. David* styles him *the Holy One of God. Isaiah*, or rather God speaking by *Isaiah*, calls him, *His own righteous Servant; his Elect; his Beloved, in whom his soul delighted. Jeremiah* styles him *The Lord, our righteousness.* Christ himself declares in his intercessory prayer to the Father, *I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do;* and asserts, that *the Father and himself are one;* and *that he, who hath seen him, hath seen the Father.* He also says, *The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.* At his baptism, also, and during his transfiguration, God, the Father, himself declared his character, in those memorable words, *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.* A similar testimony was given by the Spirit of truth when he *descended* upon Christ *in a bodily shape, like a dove.*

To these and the like declarations, which might be easily multiplied to a great extent, various other kinds of testimony are added in the Scriptures.

The *Jews*, who lived on the borders of the Sea of *Galilee*, when assembled to behold the cure of the deaf man, who had an impediment in his speech, exclaimed, amid their astonishment at the miracle, *He hath done all things well.* During his life, his enemies laboured hard to fix some imputation upon his character; but their efforts terminated in the groundless and senseless calumnies, *that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils; and that he was a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners:* calumnies, daily and completely refuted by the testimony of those, among whom he continually spent his time, and even by the demons which he cast out, and the maniacs whom they possessed. Even these felt themselves constrained to say, *I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God.*

In his trial before the Sanhedrim, and afterwards before *Pilate*, every art, which cunning could devise, fraud sanction, or malice execute, was practised, in order to fasten upon him at least some species of criminality. But, in spite of all the subornation and perjury, to which they had recourse, they were unable to prove him guilty of a single fault. *Pilate's* repeated examinations of him terminated with this public declaration, *I find no fault in this man.*

*Judas*, after he was called as a disciple, lived with him through

all his public ministry, and was a witness of his most private conduct; a companion of his most retired hours; a partner in his most undisguised conversation. At these seasons, if ever, the man is brought out to view. At these seasons, hypocrisy and imposture feel the burden of concealment too strongly, not to throw off the mask; uncover themselves, to obtain a necessary relief from the pressure of constraint, and cease awhile to force nature, that they may be refreshed for new imposition.

But *Judas* never saw a single act, and never heard a single word, which, even in his own biassed judgment, left the smallest stain upon the character of his Master. This he directly declared to the chief priests in that remarkable assertion, *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.* Far beyond this, when the least fault in the conduct of Christ, could he have recollected it, would have relieved the agonies of his conscience, and justified, or at least palliated, his treason; he put an end to his own life, because he could not endure the misery, springing from a sense of his guilt. In this gross and dreadful act he gave, therefore, the strongest testimony, which is possible, to the perfect innocence of the Redeemer.

Correspondent with this testimony is that of all antiquity. Neither the *Mishna*, nor the *Talmud*, which contain the whole substance of the *Jewish* testimony on this subject; neither *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, nor *Julian*, who may be fairly considered as having given us the whole of *heathen* testimony; have fixed upon Christ the minutest charge of either sin or folly. To the time of *Origen*, we have his declaration, (which is evidence of the most satisfactory nature) that within the vast compass of his information nothing of this nature had ever appeared. In modern times, the enemies of Christianity have laboured with great industry and ingenuity to fasten upon him some species of accusation. But they have laboured in vain. Unlike, in this respect, that glorious Orb, to which he is compared in the Scriptures, nothing has ever eclipsed his splendour; no spot has ever been found on his aspect.

That we may form just and affecting views of this part of our Saviour's character, it will be useful, without dwelling any longer on a general survey of his holiness, to proceed to the consideration of those particulars, in which it was especially exemplified.

1st. *The* PIETY *of Christ was uniform, and complete.*

His supreme *love* to God was divinely manifested in the cheerfulness, with which he undertook the most arduous, and at the same time the most benevolent, of all employments, and of course that, which was most pleasing to him, and most honourable to his name. His *faith* was equally conspicuous in the unshaken constancy, with which he encountered the innumerable difficulties in his progress; His *patience*, in the quietness of spirit, with which he bore every affliction; and his *submission*, in his ready acquiescence in his Father's will, while requiring him to pass through the

deepest humiliation, pain, and sorrow. However humbling, however distressing, his allotments were, even in his agony in the garden, and in the succeeding agonies of the cross, he never uttered a complaint. But, though afflicted beyond example, he exhibited a more perfect submission, than is manifested by the most pious men under small and ordinary trials. No inhabitant of this world ever showed such an entire reverence for God, on any occasion, as he discovered, on all occasions. He gave his Father, at all times, the glory of his mission, his doctrines, and his miracles; seized every proper opportunity to set forth, in terms pre-eminently pure and sublime, the excellence of the divine character; and spoke, uniformly, in the most reverential manner of the word, the law, and the ordinances, of God.

At the same time, he was constant and fervent in the worship of God; in prayer, in praise, and in a cheerful compliance with all the requisitions of the Mosaic system; civil, ceremonial and moral: celebrated the fasts, feasts, and sacrifices, of his nation; and thus, according with his own language, *fulfilled* in this respect *all righteousness.* Such, in a word, was his whole life; so unspotted; so uniform; so exalted; that all persons, who have succeeded him, both inspired and uninspired, have found themselves obliged, whenever they wished to exhibit a perfect pattern of piety, to appeal to the example of Christ.

2dly. *His performance of the duties, which he owed to mankind, was equally perfect.*

This part of our Saviour's character cannot be properly understood without descending to particulars. I observe, therefore, in the

First place, *that his filial piety was of this remarkable nature.*

Notwithstanding he was so magnificently introduced into the world by a long train of types and predictions, and by illustrious instances of the immediate ministration of Angels; he was entirely obedient, throughout almost all his life, to the commands of his parents. No person was ever so ushered into life; or marked out by Providence for so extraordinary purposes. No person so early engrossed the attention and admiration of the great and wise by his mental endowments. Whatever could awaken in his mind the loftiest views of ambition, enkindle a strong sense of personal superiority, or produce feelings of absolute independence, he could recount among the incidents, which either attended him at his birth, or followed him in his childhood.

Still no child, no youth, no man of riper years, was ever so respectful and dutiful to his parents. *To them,* in the language of St. Luke, *he was subject,* evidently, till he *began to be about thirty years of age.* To this period he lived, contentedly, a humble, retired, and unobserved life; following quietly the occupation of his father, with such industry and regularity as to be known familiarly by the appellation of *the Carpenter.*

Civilized men have united with a single voice to applaud, and extol, Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia, for his moderation and condescension, displayed in labouring at the employment of a Shipcarpenter, in the *Saardam*. Unquestionably, this conduct was the result of sound wisdom, and unusual self-government, on the part of this great man; and fairly claimed the admiration, which it received. What, then, shall be said, when we behold him, whose title was the Son of God; whose birth Angels proclaimed, predicted, and sung; to whom Angels ministered at his pleasure; who commanded winds, and waves, and life, and death; who triumphed over the grave, and ascended to heaven; working at an employment equally humble, not a few days only, but the principal part of his life: and all this, not to subserve the purposes of ambition, but from a sense of duty, and in the exercise of filial piety?

The same character was gloriously manifested by Christ during his public ministry. Particularly, while he hung upon the cross, suffered the agonies of that excruciating death, and *bore the sins of mankind in his body on the accursed tree;* when he saw his unhappy mother pierced with anguish, by his side, he forgot his own woes; commended her to the care of his beloved disciple *John*, as his future mother; and that disciple to her, as her future son; and thus made provision for her maintenance and comfort through life. Thus he began; and thus he ended.

Secondly. *Of the same perfect nature were his Candour and Liberality.*

The spirit, which is denoted by these two names, is substantially the same; and differs, chiefly, by being exercised toward different objects. That this spirit should exist at all in Christ will naturally seem strange; when we remember, that he was born of a humble family, in the most bigoted nation in the world, and in the most bigoted age of that nation; and was educated in that humble manner, which naturally leads the mind to imbibe with reverence the bigoted sentiments of the great, and to add to them the numerous and peculiar prejudices springing from ignorance. But from all this influence he escaped without the least contamination. There is not an instance, recorded in his life, in which he was more attached to any person, or thing, or more opposed to either than truth and wisdom must entirely justify. There is no instance, in which he ever censured, or commended, those of his own nation, or of any other, either more, or less, than plain justice demanded. On the contrary, he commended every thing, approved by wisdom and piety; and reproved every thing bigoted, partial, prejudiced, and faulty, in man.

A great part of the people of his nation were his enemies; and among the most bitter of these were the *Pharisees*. Yet he said to his disciples, *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all, therefore, that they say unto you, do. But do ye not after their works:*

*for they say, and do not.* No commendation of the precepts of these men could easily have been conveyed in more expressive language than this. By directing his disciples to follow their precepts, he declared them, in forcible terms, to be true and right: that is, with such exceptions, as he has elsewhere made, and as the same exact regard to truth demanded.

The same disposition he manifested in the case of the *Syrophenician woman;* and in that of the *Roman Centurion.* The *Jews* considered all the heathen nations as deserving nothing but contempt and detestation, and called them dogs. But Christ preferred the faith of the Centurion, although a *Roman*, to that of all other persons, with whom he conversed; even to that of his own Apostles.

In the same generous manner he treated the *publicans;* regarded by their countrymen as the vilest of sinners. In the same manner, also, he treated the *Samaritans;* against whom the *Jews* exercised the most furious hatred, and with whom they refused to have any *dealings;* even those of the most indifferent and necessary kind.

The same disposition he showed with respect to doctrines, opinions, and customs. No specimen can be produced, from the history of his life, of bigoted attachment to his own doctrines, or those of his nation, or those of his friends; of prejudice against those of strangers or enemies; of favouritism or party spirit; of contracted regard to any custom because sanctioned by public usage, or general respect, of reluctance to conform to any innocent practice, by whomsoever adopted; or of any narrowness of mind whatever.

When invited to a marriage, he cheerfully went; when bidden to a feast, he readily consented to become a guest. Nor did it make any difference, because the host was on the one hand *Matthew* or *Zaccheus*, a *publican;* or, on the other, *Simon*, a *Pharisee.* In a word, he adopted, and commended, nothing, except what was true and right; and neither refused, nor condemned, any thing, except that which was false and evil. Nor did it make the least difference with him, whether that which was approved, or censured, was adopted by friends, or enemies.

Thirdly. *His Prudence was consummate on all occasions.*

Particularly was it manifested in avoiding the wiles, and open assaults, of the Jews. Notwithstanding the invincible firmness of mind, universally displayed by our Saviour; notwithstanding he lost no opportunity of doing good; yet he never wantonly exposed himself to any suffering; discovering clearly, on every occasion, a total opposition, to that vain and idle fool-hardiness, which rushes into danger, merely to gain the reputation of being courageous.

The same prudence is strongly evinced in teaching his disciples, and others, as their minds were able to receive his instructions; giving milk to babes, and strong meat to men; opening new doctrines, and duties, by degrees; and never *pouring new wine into old bottles.* At the same time, he commended his precepts, both to the heart and the understanding, by *their form.* At one time, he com-

municated them in short *aphorisms ;* easily understood, deeply felt, long remembered, and readily applied to practice. At another, he conveyed them in parables; simple, beautiful, natural, and affecting; catching the imagination and feelings, as well as convincing the understanding. At another, he entered into plain, but profound, curious, and unanswerable, reasonings: showing, both from the works and the word of God, that his precepts were just, and his doctrines true. Thus he charmed by variety and novelty, as well as proved by argument and evidence; and *became*, innocently, *all things to all men ; that* at least he *might gain some*.

The same character he discovered in a manner not less remarkable, in answering the questions, and resolving the cases, proposed to him by the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*. In every instance of this nature he refuted their arguments, exploded their opinions, defeated their crafty designs against him, and publicly put them to shame and to silence. Thus he beautifully illustrated the truth of that memorable declaration, which he had anciently made concerning himself, *I, wisdom, dwell with prudence*.

The same truth he still more strikingly illustrated by the uniform tenour of his life. This was such, as to defeat all the malicious accusations of his numerous and bitter enemies; and to place his character beyond a doubt of its innocence and uprightness. To this end, it was not sufficient that he was *really* innocent and upright. It was additionally necessary, that he should be consummately prudent. In proportion to their want of prudence, all men are endangered in this respect; and most become sufferers. But Christ was regularly considered as an innocent man by all persons, even of moderate candour; had a high reputation for worth in the eyes of the public; and, when tried on the accusation of enemies and villains, before a malignant and unprincipled tribunal, was pronounced clear of every imputation. Equal proof of prudence, as well as innocence, was never furnished in the present world.

Fourthly. *His integrity was equally perfect.*

This dignified characteristic is strongly visible in several of the things already recited as proofs of his *Candour:* candour itself being no other than a particular mode of exercising integrity. Of this nature are his impartial censures and commendations of his friends and his enemies. The same spirit is conspicuous in his reproofs, which, on the one hand, were bold, open, and sincere, and on the other, were perfectly free from selfishness and ill nature. It is also strikingly evident in the perfect *simplicity of his instructions and conversation*. In them all, there cannot be found a single instance of flattery, sarcasm, ambiguity, vanity, arrogance, or ill-will. Nay, nothing is *enhanced* beyond the strictest bounds of propriety. Nothing is so coloured as to deceive; nothing left so defective as to mislead. The strongest specimen, ever given of integrity, in the manner of communication, is found in the instructions of Christ.

Many persons have been distinguished for their integrity; and so distinguished, as to leave behind them, in their history, little or no stain upon their reputation in this respect. But Christ differs, evidently, from them all *in the degree* in which he manifested this attribute; and so differs from them, as that simplicity and openness of communication forms a remarkable characteristic *of the style*, in which he spoke; and constitutes, eminently, what may be called *his own original manner*. As this runs through all his discourses, as recited by the several Evangelists; it is evident from this fact, that it was his own manner, and not theirs.

The same illustrious attribute was, in the same manner, evinced in all his conduct. By applause he was never allured: by obloquy he was never driven. Popular favour he never coveted: popular odium he never dreaded. To friends and enemies, to the populace and the *Sanhedrim*, he declared truth, and proclaimed their duty, without favour or fear. When he stood before the Sanhedrim, and was on trial for his life; being adjured by the high priest to declare whether he *was the Son of God;* he boldly said, though he knew that death would be the consequence, *I am*. And, to place the declaration beyond all reasonable doubt, subjoined, *And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*. In a word, he treated all men, while he was teaching, exhorting, and reproving them, as being merely rational and immortal beings; and not as friends or enemies; nor as members of any sect, party, or nation. In this manner he left a noble example to every succeeding Teacher of mankind

5thly. *His Benevolence, also, was without an example.*

Many of the observations, already made, strongly illustrate this glorious attribute of the Redeemer. It will, however, be useful to mention other things, more particularly, as exemplifications of this disposition. Among the numerous miracles, wrought by Christ, there is not one which was not performed for the direct purpose of lessening distress, or danger, or producing safety, comfort, and happiness, to mankind. Many of these miracles, also, were wrought for those, whom he knew to be his enemies; with the full conviction, on his part, that they would continue to be his enemies. While his life was filled up with that peculiarly bitter provocation, which arises from ingratitude, daily repeated, never wearied, and even increased by the very kindness which should have melted the heart; even this provocation never slackened his hand, nor moved his resentment. When he came in sight of that ungrateful city, *Jerusalem*, where so many prophets had been killed, where so many of his benevolent offices, and so many of his wonderful miracles had been performed in vain; notwithstanding all the injuries which he had received from the inhabitants; notwithstanding they were now employed in devising means to take away his life; *he wept over* the guilty, abandoned spot; and cried with inexpressible tenderness, *O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! that killest the prophets, and*

*stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and ye would not.* On the Cross he forgave and prayed, and secured eternal life, for murderers, while they were imbruing their hands in his blood, and rendering a most bitter death still more bitter by adding insult to agony. At the same time, he communicated faith, and peace, and hope, the forgiveness of sin, and an earnest of immortal glory, to the miserable malefactor, who, by his side, hung over the burnings of devouring fire.

6thly. *Equally wonderful was his disinterestedness.*

This attribute, though often considered as the same with benevolence, is really a qualification of benevolence: as is evident from the mere phraseology, so customarily adopted, of *disinterested benevolence*. But it is the crown, the glory, the finishing, of this character.

There is not an instance, in which Christ appears to have proposed his own private, separate good, as the end either of his actions or sufferings. He came to live, and die, for others; and *those*, enemies, and sinners. From them he needed, and could receive, nothing. From him they needed every thing; and from him alone could they receive that which they needed. For such beings all his labours, instructions, and sorrows, were planned, and completed. The objects which he had in view, were the most disinterested, public, and honourable, which the Universe has ever known; the deliverance of mankind from sin and misery, their elevation to virtue and happiness, and the supreme glory of God in this divine and most wonderful work. These objects he accomplished with extreme difficulty and self-denial, and with immense expense on his own part. This arduous work he began with a fixed purpose; pursued with unshaken constancy; and triumphantly completed, in spite of every discouragement, difficulty, and danger. On all his progress heaven looked with wonder and gratulation; and, at his return to that happy world, the ransomed of the Lord exclaimed, and will for ever exclaim, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

# SERMON LII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HOLINESS OF CHARACTER.—HIS SELF-GOVERNMENT.

HEBREWS vii. 26.—*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*

IN the preceding discourse, I considered *the holiness of Christ as one great branch of his Priestly character.* In the course of this consideration I stated, summarily, my views concerning *the manner, in which Christ performed the duties, owed by him immediately to God, and to mankind.* I shall now make a few observations concerning *those, which he owed more immediately to himself.* The two former classes are generally denoted by the names *piety* and *benevolence;* the latter is usually denominated *temperance*, or *self-government.*

It ought, here, to be observed, that our Saviour's life was regulated by the rules of perfect virtue in all those ordinary and less delicate cases, in which mankind so commonly transgress; and in which we usually look for the proofs of a gross and guilty character. The truth is, imputations of the kind here referred to, are not made on the Redeemer even by the worst of men; and have ceased, notwithstanding the groundless and brutal calumnies of his contemporary enemies, who accused him, as *a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*, to have any place in the belief, or even in the obloquy, of mankind. To say, that our Saviour was chaste, and temperate, is so far from seeming like a commendation of his character, that it rather wears the aspect of that cold approbation, which is considered as grudged; and is yielded, merely because it cannot with decency be refused. Nay, it may with strict propriety be said, that the very approach to this subject savours in a degree rather of impropriety and indelicacy; and wears more the appearance of an anxious and sedulous disposition to shield a doubtful reputation, by watchful efforts to say every thing, which can be said, in its favour, than of a sober determination to utter the sincere approbation of the understanding, and the just applause of the heart.

With these observations premised, I observe,

1st. *That the Industry of Christ was wonderful.*

St. *Peter* describes the character of the Redeemer in these memorable words: *Who went about doing good.* Acts x. 38. This emphatical description exhibits the active part, or side, of his life, just as it really was; and, though extremely summary, it is com-

plete. Doing good was his only proper, professional employment; in this employment he did not, like other beneficent persons, stay at home, where he might meet with solitary and casual objects of his kindness, but went unceasingly from place to place, to find the greatest number, and those on whom his kindness might be most advantageously employed.

The whole life of Christ was a perfect comment on this text. He himself has often told us his own views concerning the great duty of industry in the service of God. When his mother gently reproved him for the anxiety, which he had occasioned to his parents, when, at twelve years of age, he staid behind at Jerusalem, while they went forward three days' journey towards *Nazareth*; he replied, *How is it, that ye have sought me? Wist ye not, that I must be about my Father's business?* This honourable scheme of life, so early adopted, and so forcibly expressed, was the uniform rule of his conduct at every succeeding period; and is often mentioned by him, as such, during the progress of his public ministry. Thus, in his reply to the disciples, asking him a question concerning *the man who was born blind*, he said, *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day. The night cometh, when no man can work.* John ix. 4. Thus, when the Pharisees informed him, that *Herod would kill him*, and urged him, therefore, to *get him out, and depart thence*, he said unto them, *Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures, to-day and to-morrow; and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must work to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following.* Thus, also, he declared, universally, the character of his life, in those memorable words, *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.* Who could claim, with so much propriety, to be ministered unto, as Christ? From whom ought not ministering to be expected, rather than from him? Finally, when he was conversing with the woman of *Sychar*, and his disciples solicited him to eat, he answered, *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

In exact accordance with the spirit of these declarations, we find immediately after his baptism, going into the wilderness, to suffer, and to overcome, in his temptation. As soon as this was ended, he journeyed unceasingly throughout *Judea, Galilee, and Berea*, and occasionally in the neighbouring countries; instructing, healing, comforting, and befriending, all, whom he found willing to hear his words, or fitted to receive his assistance. His early life was a life of industrious labour, literally so called. His public life was also an uninterrupted course of laborious exertions, made in a different manner; a period, filled up with duty and usefulness. With an unwearied hand he scattered blessings wherever he went. The manner in which, and the object to whom, the good was to be done, were to him things indifferent, if it was really done. Whether they were friends or enemies, Jews or Heathen, disciples or strangers; whether they were to be taught, healed, restored to sight,

hearing, or life; he was always prepared to bestow the blessing, wherever there was necessity to demand, or faith to receive, it. So wonderfully numerous were the labours of Christ, as to furnish a solid foundation of propriety for that hyperbolical and singular declaration of St. *John*, with which he concludes his Gospel: *And there are also many other things, which Jesus did; the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose, that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

A stronger instance of this disposition can hardly be given, than one of those, to which I have already alluded. Hungry, weary, and faint, in his journey through the country of *Samaria*, he came to the neighbourhood of the city *Sychar*, and seated himself *on Jacob's well.* A woman, a miserable inhabitant of that city, came out to draw water, and presented him with an object, to whom good might be done, and who infinitely needed it. Forgetting all his own sufferings, our Saviour applied himself with the utmost diligence to accomplish the conversion of this sinful woman, and that of her countrymen. After he had conversed a considerable time with her, she left him, to call the people of the city. His disciples *then prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat, that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work.* The sentiments, here expressed, and on this occasion gloriously exemplified in the diligence, with which he devoted himself to the business of converting this poor woman, and her neighbours, were the rules, by which he governed his whole life.

As he drew near to the close of his ministry, he appears to have been even more industrious, if possible; and to have taught, and done, more, than during any former period of the same length: as if he thought the remaining time valuable, in proportion to its shortness.

Thus he was able to say with perfect confidence, and exact truth, after he had ended his ministry, *Father, I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

2dly. *His Fortitude was not less remarkable.*

This characteristic of Christ is every where discovered, and with the highest advantage. To form just views of it, we ought to remember, that he was alone, poor, and friendless; that he was more opposed than any other person ever was; and that he was opposed by the government, and nation of the Jews; especially by the learned, wise, and great. We ought to remember, that, wherever he was, he found enemies; enemies to his person, and to his mission; subtle, watchful, persevering, base, and malignant. All his strength, in the mean time, was, under God, in himself; in his mind; in his wisdom and virtue. Yet he met every danger with unshaken firmness, with immoveable constancy. He bore, not only without despondency, without shrinking, and without a murmur, but with

serenity and triumph, all the evils of life; and, except the hiding of his Father's face, and the manifestations of his anger against sin, all the evils of death. At the same time, all this was done by him, while these evils were suffered by continual anticipation.

They were, in a sense, always in his view. He foretold them daily; and yet encountered them with invincible constancy. Other men, however boldly and firmly they encounter *actual* calamities, are yet prone to sink under *such as are expected*. The distresses of a foreboding heart who can bear?

When, during his agony in the garden, the *sweat* flowed from him in the form *of great drops of blood;* he coolly met the guard which approached to seize him, reproved *Peter* for his violence, healed the wounded ear of *Malchus*, secured the escape of his disciples, and delivered himself up to those very soldiers, whom his presence had awed into statues.

With the same invincible spirit he endured the miseries, and injuries, of the crucifixion. All the insults, which were mingled with his agonies on the cross, were insufficient to remove his self-possession, or disturb his serenity, for a moment. Amidst them all, he was able to forget himself, to pity and admonish the daughters of *Jerusalem*, to provide for the future comfort of his Mother, and to pray for the forgiveness and salvation of his Murderers.

3dly. *Not less wonderful was his Meekness.*

Meekness is a voluntary and serene quietness of mind under provocations, perceived and felt, but of choice unresented.

No person was ever so abused, or provoked, as Christ; nor in circumstances, which so greatly aggravated the provocation. He came from heaven, lived, and died, only to do good to his enemies; and received all his abuses, while occupied in this divine employment. Ingratitude, therefore, and that of the blackest kind, was mingled with every injury, and added keenness to its edge. At the same time, every abuse was causeless and wanton: without even an imaginary wrong done by him, to excite ill will in his persecutors.

But no person ever bore any provocation with such meekness, as he exhibited in every instance of this nature. Neither revenge, nor wrath, as this word is usually understood, ever found a place in his breast. His character was maligned; his actions were perverted by the worst misconstruction; himself was insulted often, and alway; and all the amiableness and worth of his most benevolent conduct insolently denied; yet *when reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously.* In his trial, particularly, and at his crucifixion, he was mocked, and insulted, beyond example. Yet though beaten, buffetted, pierced with thorns, spit upon, derided with mock-worship, and wounded with every other insult, which the ingenuity of his enemies could devise, he quietly submitted to them all.

*The nature of all these, also, he perfectly understood;* and the sting, which each conveyed, he deeply felt. The tenderness of Christ's affections, the exquisiteness of his sensibility, are strongly evident, not only in the history of his life, but also in those remarkable predictions, contained in the 22d, 40th, 69th, and 88th, Psalms. Here, in prophetical language, Christ utters the very feelings, which he experienced, both while he lived, and when he died. No picture of sorrow is drawn in stronger colours, or formed of more vivid images; or can more forcibly exhibit exquisite tenderness and sensibility. In this picture, the injuries and insults which Christ received, while on earth, hold a distinguished place; particularly those, which surrounded him at his trial and crucifixion.

The manner, in which he felt them all, he himself has explained to us in these psalms; and has taught us to consider them, as filling his heart with anguish and agony. Still, he quietly yielded himself to them all, without a momentary resentment; without a single reproachful or unkind observation. No cloud of passion appears to have arisen in his breast; or obscured, for a moment, the steady sunshine of his soul. Calm, and clear, and bright, amid the rage of the tempest beneath, he pursued his celestial course with an undisturbed progress, with a divine serenity.

4thly. *Equally extraordinary was his Humility.*

No person ever had the same reason to entertain a high opinion of himself; or would have been so naturally justified, or so far excusable, in indulging lofty thoughts of his own character, and in wearing a deportment of superiority to his fellow-men. No person was ever so ushered into the world. Think, for a moment, what it is for a person to be prophesied of, during four thousand years before he was born; to be announced to the world, repeatedly, in the songs and predictions of Angels; to be the Antitype of a long train of august institutions, and a glorious succession of the most distinguished personages, numbered among mankind. No person ever did so great and wonderful things. Think what a splendour of character is displayed in healing the sick; cleansing the leper; restoring soundness to the lame, hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb; in calling the dead from the grave; silencing the winds and the waves, and casting out demons from the possession of man; and all this by a command. Think what it is to receive the homage and obedience of angels; to be proclaimed by a voice from heaven, *the beloved Son of God;* to have the spirit of God descend upon him in a visible form; and to see all nature, animated and unanimated, obey his voice, and execute his pleasure; and thus to stand alone among the race of Adam, exempted from the common character of men by marks, the most clear, certain, and glorious.

His situation, at the same time, was such, as most to excite vain glory, and flatter ambition. To these wonderful things he

rose from the most humble condition of life; a condition, heightening by contrast the splendour of all the great things, which he did, and received. Persons, rising from such a condition into the admiration of mankind, are usually much more strongly affected, than those, who have lived always in superior circumstances, and been from the beginning objects of distinguished applause.

Christ also possessed far more wisdom, than any other person ever possessed; wisdom, respecting the most noble and sublime subjects; such as the character of God, the invisible world, divine Providence, and the nature, duties, and everlasting concerns, of man. On all these subjects, the wisdom, contained in his instructions, totally excels all the wisdom of the greatest and wisest men of every age. This wisdom, also, he possessed without the aid of education. His precepts and doctrines were his own; and underived from any preceding instruction. But nothing more inflates the pride of wise men, than to be indebted for their wisdom to themselves alone; to native genius, to original thought, invention. and research; and thus to have become the authors of discoveries, which have eluded the ingenuity, and escaped the invention, of all who went before them.

These things his countrymen saw, heard, and acknowledged; and that, in a manner, experienced by no other inhabitant of this world. They saw him often engaged in disputes with the greatest men of his age and country, concerning subjects of the highest importance. They saw *him* uniformly, and completely, victorious, and *them* always put to silence, and to flight. His triumph they not only beheld, but frequently enjoyed; and, on account of it, publicly gave glory to God. They declared him to be a prophet; the peculiar Prophet promised by *Moses;* and the Messiah; rang his praises throughout *Judea*, and the surrounding countries; attempted to make him their King; and, spreading their garments where he was to pass, sung hosannas before him, to glorify his character.

But, fitted as these motives were to kindle every latent spark of pride in the human heart, and to blow up a flame of ambition which should reach to heaven, he was superior to them all; and that from the beginning. At twelve years of age, he astonished the wise and great among his countrymen with his wisdom. Yet he obeyed the first call of his parents; and returned with them from the scene of applause to their humble cottage. When his countrymen sought him, that they might place him on a throne, he retired into the desert. When greeted with hosannas by the enraptured multitude, he changed neither his demeanour, nor his daily employments; but forgot the splendour, the applause, and himself, to weep over *Jerusalem*, and deplore the approaching ruin of that ungrateful city.

He chose the humblest life; the humblest associates; the humblest food; the humblest dress; and the humblest manners; and

voluntarily yielded himself to the most humiliating death. Nor was his character more distinguished by greatness, wisdom, and moral dignity, than by his humility of mind and life. He himself has alleged it, as one proof of his Messiahship, that *the poor had the Gospel preached to them* by his mouth.

## REMARKS.

I have now finished the observations, which I proposed to make under the first general head, mentioned in the preceding discourse; and *have given an account*, so far as I thought necessary, *of several things, in which the holiness of the Redeemer was exemplified.* The second, viz. *the importance of this attribute to his priesthood*, I shall reserve for future discussion; and shall proceed to make two or three *remarks*, naturally arising from what has been already said.

1st. *We have here seen ample proof, that Christ was what he declared himself to be.*

The precepts of Christ required mankind to be absolutely holy, or perfect; and allowed no defect of obedience, as well as no degree of transgression: declaring this character to be the only one, which, for its own sake, could be accepted of God. In what has been said, we have the fullest proof, that he was exactly such, as he taught others to be; a complete example of the character, which he required. Of all the things, attempted by man on this side of the grave, none is more difficult, or more transcends human efforts, than the attainment of this perfection. The world has never seen a second specimen of this character. How remote, then, must it be, when the best of mankind have fallen so far short of it, from the possible attainment of hypocrites, impostors, and pretenders! How distant from every counterfeit! How absolutely unattainable, hitherto, by the least blemished integrity, and the most exalted piety, which has been merely human. A single act, or a few actions, may, to the eye of spectators, seem great, spotless, and exalted. A retired life, little seen, and scarcely observed, may not disclose its defects. But a life, spent in the midst of mankind, and daily exposed to the view of multitudes, and filled up with actions of every kind, cannot fail to discover, even in the best of men, continual and numerous imperfections. Perfect rectitude of *heart*, therefore, can alone have produced perfect rectitude of *life*, in our Saviour. Of course, he was what he declared himself, and what he is every where declared to be, in the Scriptures. Of course, he was the Messiah; the Son of God; the Saviour of Mankind. His doctrines and precepts were from God; and require, with divine authority, the faith and obedience of all men. His *life was given as a Ransom for many, and his flesh for the life of the world.* He did not, therefore, die, *to bear witness to the truth of his doctrines;* but *as a propitiation for sin, and a ransom for sinners.* As such, therefore, we are required to believe on him, if we wish to be saved.

A strong additional proof of the truth, now under consideration, is furnished by *the circumstances in which Christ was born, and lived.* He was born, and educated, as has been observed before, in the humblest circumstances, and continued in them throughout his life. With plain and ignorant men only did he spend almost the whole of his days; men, whom he instructed, but from whom he could never receive instruction. At the same time, the learned men of his age and country had wandered, in their doctrines, far from truth and righteousness. Their opinions, grounded partly on a perverted revelation, and partly on a wretched and debasing collection of traditions, were, to a great extent, false, foolish, and stupid, beyond all easy conception. Their worship was a vain and miserable round of external rites. Their morals, also, were licentious, and polluted by all the dictates of lust, pride, and avarice; and their whole character was a gross and dreadful mixture of bigotry, hypocrisy, oppression, violence, and impurity.

In such an age, in such circumstances, among such men, and in the midst of such errors and sins, Christ was born and educated, lived and died. Let every honest, every sober, man now say, whence it arose, that he was an exception to the character of all his countrymen, and to that of mankind; that his wisdom transcended that of all other men; and that his life left that of every child of *Adam* out of comparison, and out of sight: a *Sun of righteousness*, at whose presence every star disappears from the firmament.

2dly. *These Observations strongly evince the Inspiration of the Apostles.*

This perfect character of Christ they have left on record. It is perfectly delineated; not by general description, or loose, unmeaning panegyric; but by filling up a plain, simple, natural history with characteristical actions and discourses; and tracing features, distinct in themselves, and yet harmonious; blending into one complete whole, totally distinguished from every other character, hitherto drawn by man: as unlike, nay much more unlike, any other person, ever seen or heard of, in this world, than that of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Achilles*, or *Hector*.

Attempts to form such a character, as should be acknowledged to be perfect, have been often made; but they have invariably failed of success. The efforts of the heathen philosophers, and poets, to paint their wise and perfect men, are well known to be miserably imperfect. The *Æneas* of *Virgil* is a picture of this kind; but, notwithstanding the genius of the writer, is so far from perfection, as not to be even amiable; but gross, vicious, and hateful. The *Wise Man of Philosophy* is little better: for he is impious, proud, impure, false, and unfeeling. Infidels have succeeded no better; and even Christians have been compelled to derive all, that is good and commendable, in the characters drawn

by them, from the very record left by the Apostles; the life, precepts, and doctrines, of Christ.

Whence, then, were these men able to perform a task, too hard for all the rest of their fellow-men? Plainly not from learning; for they had none: not from genius; for in this most of them were evidently excelled by many others: not from the examples, furnished to them in their own Scriptures. *Abraham*, the most perfect example of this nature, exhibited at length, is wonderfully inferior to the character of Christ; although wonderfully superior to the best men of heathen antiquity. All the saints of the Old Testament could not, were their excellencies united, supply the most ingenious mind with materials, out of which the life of Christ could be formed, even by such a mind. Nor could all the doctrines, contained in that invaluable book, enable such a mind to originate, by its own powers, the instructions of Christ. The character is not only superior, but singular. The wisdom is not only greater, more various, and more satisfactory; but is wrought into forms, communicated in discourses, and started by incidents, all of which are too particular, too natural, and too appropriate, to admit, not the belief merely, but the possibility, of their having been compiled. The character is perfectly new and original; like nothing which preceded, and nothing which has succeeded, it. At the same time it is all of a piece; every part being suited exactly to every other part, and all the parts to the whole. As this character could not have been formed by the Apostles, without an actual example; it was equally impossible, that it should have been formed, *at the time* when they wrote, with the aid of such an example. The Gospel of St. *Matthew* was, according to the earliest computation, written, as I formerly observed, eight years after the death of Christ. How plainly impossible was it, that he should have remembered Christ's *Sermon on the Mount; his Parabolical Sermon; or his discourses concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the final judgment!* How evidently impossible is it, that he should have made them! Who could make them now? Compare them with the noblest efforts of *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Aristotle*, *and Cicero*. Who, now, what peasant, what beggar, what child of twelve years of age, would take their discourses as his creed; as the directory of his conscience; as the law of his life? But the discourses of Christ were the creed, the wisdom, the boast, the glory, of *Bacon*, *Locke*, *Newton*, *Butler*, *Boyle*, *Berkley*, *Addison*, *and Johnson*. Can it be imagined, that this Jewish publican possessed a mind sufficiently sublime and capacious, sufficiently discerning and pure, to command the admiration, belief, and obedience, of these great men? Can it be believed, that, with all the wisdom of the world before them, and their own superior understanding to direct their choice, they, and ten thousand other enlightened men, should bow, with a single heart and voice, to precepts and instructions, devised by the mere native abilities of this uneducated inhabitant of *Judea?*

But if *Matthew* could not have devised, nor remembered, the life and discourses of Christ; what shall be said of *John?* His Gospel was written about fifty years after the death of the Saviour; and contains more, and more wonderful, discourses of this glorious Person. All these, also, are exhibited, as springing out of appropriate occasions, minutely specified; and are exactly fitted to each occasion. The writer, it is to be remembered, was a fisherman on the lake of *Gennesaret;* and followed this business, some time after he arrived at manhood. A mere fisherman, therefore, wrote the Gospel of St. *John*. Suppose the experiment were now to be made. Suppose an *American* fisherman, who had read the Bible from his childhood, were to be employed to form a new Gospel, and to delineate anew, as particularly as *John* has done, the life and discourses of such a person as Christ; both of them to be drawn wholly from the stores of his own mind. What must we, what must all men, be obliged to believe, would be the result of his efforts? Undoubtedly, the same narrow-minded, gross, and contemptible compound, which we now and then behold in a pamphlet, written by an ignorant man; which scarcely any person reads through, unless for the sake of seeing what such a man can write: a production, devoid of understanding, wisdom, incident, character, entertainment, and thought: a trial of patience; a provocative of contempt and pity. Such, all analogy compels us to believe, must have been the Gospel of St. *John*, had it been devised by the mere force of his own mind.

That he could have remembered the incidents and discourses contained in it, after the lapse of fifty years, I need not attempt to disprove: since it was never believed, and will never be believed, by any man.

But the Gospel of *John* was written by a fisherman. The writer himself declares it; and the declaration is confirmed by the testimony of all antiquity. Read this book; consider the sublime and glorious wisdom which it contains, and the wonderful life which it records; and then tell me, whether the supposition, that it was revealed, or that it was written without Revelation, involves the greater miracle.

# SERMON LIII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HOLINESS OF HIS CHARACTER.—IMPORTANCE OF THIS ATTRIBUTE TO THE DISTINCTION OF HIS CHARACTER, &c.

HEBREWS vii. 26.—*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*

IN the two preceding discourses, I have considered *the personal holiness of Christ* in its three great divisions of *piety, benevolence, and self-government.* I shall now proceed to a discussion of the 2d. head of discourse, originally proposed concerning this subject, and endeavour to

*Explain the importance of this attribute to Christ, as the High Priest of mankind.*

I wish it to be distinctly remembered, that I am not inquiring why personal holiness, or inherent moral excellence, was necessary to Christ. Personal holiness is indispensable to every rational being, in order to his acceptance with God: being no other than the performance of his duty in whatever situation he is placed. My inquiries respect solely the necessity of Christ's manifesting to the world, his holiness of character in a life of perfect obedience; such as he actually exhibited. Christ might have become incarnate, and died immediately; and yet have been a perfectly holy being. I ask here why it was necessary for him, as the High Priest of men, to exhibit such a life, as he actually lived.

*The pre-eminent holiness of Christ was, in this character, necessary to him.*

I. *To give him that distinction, which was indispensable.*

We are so accustomed to regard Christ as an extraordinary Person, as hardly to ask for any reason, why this peculiarity of character was necessary to him; or what influence it had, or was intended to have, on his priesthood. I shall not be able to do justice to this subject; yet I will suggest a few considerations, which have occurred to me, at the present time.

It will be readily believed by all persons, who admit the priesthood of Christ, that this office was the most important, ever assumed in the present world. He who has expiated the sins of mankind, and opened the way for their reconciliation to God, their restoration to holiness, and their introduction to heaven, has, undoubtedly, sustained the most important character, and performed the most important acts, which have been ever known to the human race. That a person, of whom these things can be truly said, must be

rationally supposed to be separated from the rest of mankind by many marks, both of personal and official distinction, is an assertion, which needs no proof. All men are by the very nature of the case prepared to admit, beforehand, that he, who is destined to so extraordinary an office, must also possess an extraordinary character.

The *Jews*, led by the several predictions, given in their Scriptures concerning the Messiah, and perhaps in some degree, also, by the nature of the case, formed concerning him apprehensions, generally of this nature. They mistook, indeed, the things, by which his personal character was to be distinguished; but were perfectly correct in their belief, that his *character* was to be singular, as well as his *office*. His life, in their view, was to find its peculiar distinction in external splendour, conquest, and dominion over all nations; who were to be subjugated by his arm. He was to reign with a glory, utterly obscuring that of every preceding conqueror; and was to divide among *them*, his favourite people, the pomp, wealth, and power, of this lower world. To them, as *the People of the Saints of the Most High*, was, in a literal sense, to be *given the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven*. To a people, conquered as they were, impatient of their yoke, panting for liberty and independence, proud of their pre-eminence as the chosen people of God, gross in their conceptions of divine truth, and confining, with an animal relish, all real good to the gratifications of sense; it can scarcely seem strange, that this should appear a rational interpretation of the prophecies concerning the Redeemer; particularly of some, which are couched in terms highly figurative. From such a people, in such a state, we could hardly expect just apprehensions concerning those sublimer glories of the MESSIAH, which lay in excellence of mind, and excellence of life; obtained the unmingled complacency of the Father; and called forth the admiration, love, and homage, of all the virtuous among mankind. Still, even the expectations of the *Jews* accord with the general truth, *that he, who sustains such an office, must also possess a character suited to that office.*

The necessity of this character to give distinction to Christ as the High Priest of mankind, appears in a striking manner from several considerations. *Particularly, it was indispensable to the accomplishment of the end of his priesthood; and, therefore, of his whole Mediatorial office, that he should engage, to a great extent, the attention of mankind.* On this, in a great measure, depended the importance and success of his public ministry, both among his cotemporaries, and among men of all succeeding ages. Had he not been an object of public curiosity, and inquiry, in his own time; his instructions, if uttered at all, must have been uttered to the rocks and the winds; and his character, unregarded in that age, would have been forgotten in the next. Or, if we suppose a

record to have been made of his instructions, they would have been the instructions of an individual, obscure, not only on account of his parentage, and the humble circumstances of his life, but on account of every thing else. Whatever they were; however wise, pure, and unexceptionable, they would have failed to arrest the attention, and command the regard, of future times, because they were not enforced by a distinguished character in their author. For extraordinary sentiments the mind instinctively looks to an extraordinary man. If Christ had not been separated from the rest of the children of Adam by singular characteristics, it would have been boldly questioned whether these instructions ever came from him; and the record, which asserted them to be his, could scarcely have been furnished with such proofs of authenticity, as to place the question beyond rational doubt. If this point had been admitted; new and equally perplexing inquiries would have arisen concerning the authority of the teacher; concerning the strangeness of the fact, that God had destined such a man to the office of giving such precepts to the world; and concerning the irreconcileableness of so insignificant an appearance with a character, distinguished by such wonderful wisdom. Strong objections are even now made by Infidels to the humble character, in which Christ appeared. What would they not have objected, if he had been marked by nothing extraordinary?

These observations respect Christ in all his offices. Had he not possessed this distinction in some clear, acknowledged manner, and in a degree unquestioned, he would never, in any sense, have become the object of any peculiar regard; and would, of course, have failed of the end of his mission. The arguments, already alleged, are, therefore, applicable to every part of his character as Mediator. But they are, in some respects, peculiarly applicable to his Priesthood. A great part of the truths, which he taught, respected himself, as the High Priest of the human race. These were truths, indispensable to the salvation of mankind. The Atonement, made by him in this office for the sins of men, is the only foundation, even for the hope of eternal life. The belief of men in this great fact is the basis of all our confidence in Christ as our Saviour; and this confidence is the only mean of our justification. But in this fact few men, to say the most, can be supposed to have believed, had not Christ been distinguished from other persons by peculiar and very honourable characteristics. There is something so repugnant to all our most rational and satisfactory thoughts, in the supposition, that a person, ranking in all things with such beings as we are, should sustain this glorious office, and accomplish this marvellous end; that it can hardly be imagined to have gained admission into the mind of any sober man.

Should it be answered, that *a distinction of some kind or other, in the degree specified,* was indeed, necessary to the character of

CHRIST, in order to render him the object of the confidence, or even the attention, of mankind; but that *this distinction was sufficiently established by his power of working miracles*, so often, and so illustriously, exemplified while he was in the world: I answer, that this power distinguished Christ from other inhabitants of the earth very honourably, but could not distinguish him sufficiently for the purpose in view. For, to say nothing of the fact, that in this respect he was not sufficiently unlike *Moses* and *Elijah*, who also wrought many and great miracles, or his *Apostles*, who *did greater works than* his own; to say nothing of the contrariety to all rational thinking, in the supposition, that a man, invested with no other proofs of an extraordinary character, should work such stupendous miracles, or any miracles at all: It is perfectly evident, that he could never be the object of *any moral regard*, unless in his moral character he had appeared sufficiently important to claim it; much less of *that supreme moral regard*, *Evangelical Faith*. In the exercise of this Faith, the Soul surrenders itself absolutely into the hands of Christ. But such a surrender cannot be made, unless to a being of such consequence, as to make the act rational, and warrantable, in the view of the understanding. But the understanding can never be persuaded, that a person, undistinguished by pre-eminent holiness, however superior might be his natural, or supernatural, endowments, could be regarded by God as an acceptable propitiation for its sins. Nor could it by any means, of which I am able to conceive, feel itself warranted to exercise this confidence toward any being, unpossessed of that consummate rectitude, particularly of that sincerity and good-will, upon which it is ultimately founded. If Christ had not, in this respect, been superior to other men, the faith placed in him would, I think, have been the same with that, which is placed in other men; and have differed from that, neither in kind, nor degree.

Holiness is the supreme distinction of moral beings, and the supreme object of moral regard. Especially, in all cases, where the approbation and acceptance of God, or the confidence of intelligent creatures, are concerned; is this the object, on which our thoughts ultimately rest, in comparison with which all others are of little importance.

II. *To enable him to magnify the Law of God, and make it honourable.*

Christ performed this important office, an office predicted by the Prophet *Isaiah*, and also by himself, many ages before his incarnation, in a manner absolutely perfect. The following particulars will, if I mistake not, illustrate this subject with advantage.

1st. *Christ in his own obedience showed, that the Law was capable of being perfectly obeyed by mankind.*

By this I mean, that beings, possessing exactly such natural powers as we possess, are, if properly disposed, proved, by the obedience of Christ, to be capable of perfectly obeying the law of God.

There is no reason to believe that Christ possessed any other natural powers, than those which are possessed by mankind generally. The difference between him and them, lay, radically, in the disposition: *His* being that of a dutiful child; and *theirs* being froward and rebellious. With these powers Christ perfectly obeyed the law of God; and thus proved, that it might be perfectly obeyed by any other person, possessing the same powers. No difference of intellect can be pleaded here; because, Christ thus obeyed in every stage of his life; with the intelligence of an infant; of a child; of a youth; and of a man. The least degree of intelligence which he possessed, after he became a moral agent, is, therefore, sufficient to enable any other moral agent thus to obey. The difficulty of obeying, experienced by us, does not, therefore, lie in the want of understanding.

The importance of this article will be easily realized, if we call to mind how prone we are to justify ourselves in sin, and to feel secure from the danger of punishment, from the consideration that we have not, naturally, sufficient power to obey; and, if at the same time, we remember, that, even to the present day, not only ordinary men and plain Christians, but even philosophers and divines, hold this doctrine, and insist on it as a part of their customary instruction. The proof here furnished, that the doctrine is wholly erroneous, is complete: for it can never be said that the mind of Christ, at its entrance upon moral agency, possessed more intelligence, and more natural ability to obey, than that of a mature man. Christ obeyed throughout his infancy and childhood. *Bacon*, *Newton*, and *Locke*, were sinful beings. The reason why they were sinful beings, was not a defect of intelligence. The difference between *them*, as moral beings, and Christ, while an infant, or a child, was a moral difference; involved moral turpitude on their part; and rendered them deserving of blame and punishment.

In this manner Christ proved the practicability of obedience, and the reasonableness of the law. If *He*, with the same natural powers which we possess, could obey the law; obedience is naturally, and certainly, practicable to *us*. If Christ obeyed, while an infant, or a little child; the requisitions of the law cannot be unreasonable. The *importance of his glorifying the law, in this respect*, needs no illustration.

2dly. *Christ, in obeying, furnished mankind an extensive, and most useful comment on the law of God.*

A moment's recollection will show us, if we need to be shown, that the nature of all precepts is more perfectly seen *in those actions which are conformed to them*, than it can be in the *abstract contemplation of the precepts themselves*. The life of Christ was exactly conformed to the precepts of the divine law; and was, therefore, a more perfect exhibition of their true nature, than any other of which they were capable. It was, particularly, a perfect

exhibition of *the nature and extent of every requirement*, so far as it was applicable to *him*. In seeing what *he did*, we learn, exactly, what *we are required to do;* more exactly, than we could possibly learn from the precept itself.

It exhibited, also, *the beauty and excellency of obedience*. This is discerned very imperfectly in the mere contemplation of the precept by which it is required. That application of the precept, through which alone its proper influence can be discerned by mere contemplation, is made so imperfectly, and seen so obscurely, by the mind, that the proper efficacy of the precept cannot, in this way, be ever realized. In *example*, in *actions*, on the contrary, the true nature, the beauty, the desirableness, of the wise and good precepts, by which such actions are governed, are distinctly perceived, and comprehended. The example of Christ is, beyond debate, far the most amiable and glorious of all the moral objects, ever exhibited to mankind. At the same time, it is an exact display of the nature and influence of the precepts of the divine law; as being other than a course of mere obedience to them.

Thus Christ has taught us what it is to obey the Law of God; what conduct is obedience, in every situation in which he was placed; in what respects, within what limits, and to what degree, obedience is to be exhibited; what words we are to use; what actions to perform; what affections to indulge, and to discover; and when, or how far, we are to withhold, to restrain, and to deny, them all. These several things, also, he has taught us with a distinctness and perfection, of which all other instruction is incapable. At the same time he has shown us the beauty and loveliness of Obedience in the strongest colours; divinely fair, divinely amiable; beheld by God the Father with infinite complacency; and admired, loved, and adored, with supreme regard, by Angels and good men.

3dly. *Christ in his obedience has made the Law honourable, because it was the Obedience of a Person, possessed of infinite dignity.*

I have formerly, and, as I flatter myself, with success, attempted to show, that Christ was God as well as Man. In these united natures he was one person; and all his actions were the result, not only of human views and affections, but of a divine approbation and choice; of a created mind, voluntarily devoted to perfect rectitude, and to perfect truth, and thus coinciding in the most exact manner with the will of God; and of the divine wisdom, complacently regarding all the dictates and conduct of this mind, and concurring with it in every affection and effort. The obedience of Christ is the obedience of this glorious person.

As Christ is a person of *infinite knowledge*, it is impossible, that he should not discern with entire exactness the propriety, or impropriety, *of becoming a subject to the law of God*, in the character

of Mediator. In conformity to this perfect discernment he became such a subject. In this character he discerned with the same exactness the propriety, or impropriety, of all the conduct, presented by the circumstances in which he was placed, to his view; and of course the propriety, or impropriety, of his absolute obedience to the divine law. But in this manner he actually obeyed.

The *infinite rectitude* of Christ prompted him to that conduct, and that only, which in all respects was right. But, under the influence of this rectitude, he became subject to the law; and, when he had become a subject, conformed his whole life, in every minute, as well as every important particular, to the precepts of that law. In this manner he showed with the most decisive evidence, the evidence of life and conduct, that infinite knowledge and rectitude dictated to him to assume the office of Mediator; to become a subject of the divine law; and in that character to yield to its precepts an universal and perfect obedience.

Christ is a person of *infinite dignity*. By this I mean, not only the splendour of moral and intellectual greatness, with which his character is invested; but the dignity also, which is conferred by omnipotence, eternity, and immutability, and by supremacy of station and dominion. With this transcendent exaltation over all things in heaven and in earth, he still chose to become subject to the divine law; and, as a subject, to obey every one of its precepts, which at any time respected either his character or his conduct. Thus he taught, in a manner which cannot be questioned, and with a decisiveness allowing of no doubt, that infinite Knowledge and Rectitude regarded the divine law as possessing such infinite excellence and glory, that it was not unbecoming a divine person to conform his own actions to its dictates, even in the minutest particulars; that it was not unsuitable to a divine person to become subject to its control, and in this state of subjection to obey its precepts in an absolute manner.

These considerations exhibit my own views of *that active obedience*, or *Righteousness of Christ, by which we are said in the Scriptures to be justified.* Christ, as a *mere man*, was of necessity subject to the law of God, equally with all other moral creatures. His obedience in this character, therefore, was necessary to his own justification, and could not be the means of ours. *As a divine Person*, he was subject to no law; and needed, and could need, no justification. By the union of his divine and human natures he became One Person, as Mediator between God and man; in such a sense One, that all his actions and sufferings became the actions and sufferings of this One Mediator. The value which was inherent in his conduct, as a divine Person, was in consequence of this union extended to all the conduct of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. When, therefore, this glorious Person voluntarily yielded himself as a subject of the divine Law; the act was the result of infinite knowledge, and rectitude; and was instamped with the worth, ne-

cessarily belonging to all the determinations, and conduct, to which these Perfections give birth. The same moral excellence and glory are attached to all the acts of Christ's obedience, subsequent to his assumption of the character of a subject. Every one of them is an act of the Mediator; and derives its true worth and importance, from the greatness and excellency of his Personal character.

As Christ assumed the Office of a Mediator, and the condition of a subject, voluntarily; as he was originally subject to no law, and could be required to yield no act of obedience; he could, if he pleased, become with propriety *a substitute for others;* and perform, in their behalf, vicarious services, which, if possessing a nature and value, suited to the case, might be reckoned to their benefit, and accepted in their stead. Had these services been due on his own account, and necessary to his own justification, as all the services of Intelligent creatures are, throughout every moment of their existence; they could never have assumed a vicarious character, nor have availed to the benefit of any person, at his final trial, beside himself. *Now*, the services of the real Mediator were all gratuitous; demanded by no law; and in no sense necessary to the justification of himself. All, therefore, that could in this case be required, to render them the means of justification to others, must be these two things only: that they should be of such a kind, as to suit the nature of the case; and that they should be of sufficient value.

That the actual services of the Mediator were suited to the real nature of the case, we know; because they were prescribed, and accepted, by the Father. We may, also, be satisfied of this truth by the manner, in which the subject is exhibited by the Scriptures. The law of God is there declared, as it is, also, by the nature of the fact itself, to be dishonoured by the transgressions of men. This dishonour, as is evident from both these sources of information, is equally done to the character and government of the Lawgiver. To pardon the transgressors in this case would be to consent to the dishonour; and to acknowledge, practically, that the law which they had transgressed, the character of the Lawgiver who prescribed it, and the government founded on it, were unreasonable and unjust. It would be to declare, and that in the most solemn manner, that such obedience, as was enjoined by the law, could not be demanded, nor expected, by a righteous and benevolent Lawgiver. But this declaration would be false; and could therefore never be made on the part of God.

But, when Christ offered himself as the substitute for sinners, *he restored*, to use his own language, *that, which he took not away.* He restored that honour to the divine law, character, and government, which men had refused to render; and removed the dishonour, done to them all by their disobedience. Nay, he did much more. In obeying the precepts of the law, he testified, that they

were such, as Infinite perfection was pleased to obey; that the government founded on them, and the character of him who published them to the universe, as the rule by which he intended to govern it for ever, were of the same glorious and perfect nature. This testimony none but Christ could give. A testimony of equal weight, the universe could not furnish. Thus in a manner, which nothing else could rival, *he magnified the law, and made it honourable*, according to the prediction of God by the prophet *Isaiah*, in the sight of Angels and men.

The influence of this conduct of Christ upon the future obedience of virtuous beings could not fail to be supreme. What creature, however exalted, can refuse to be subject to that law, to which the Son of God voluntarily became subject? Who can deny those precepts to be reasonable, all of which *he* exactly, and cheerfully, obeyed? Who can hesitate to believe that *law* to be *holy, just, and good;* who can doubt, that it is infinitely honourable to its Author, and supremely beneficial to the universe, when he knows, and remembers, that a person of infinite knowledge, rectitude, and dignity, of his own accord, submitted both his affections and his conduct to its absolute control. So far as I can see, higher glory was reflected on this great rule of righteousness by the obedience of Christ, than could have resulted from the united obedience of the whole Intelligent creation.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that *the obedience* of Christ, and his *holiness*, are convertible terms; and that all the importance of the things, mentioned under these three heads, is no other than the importance of this attribute to his priestly character.

III. *To give the necessary efficacy to his sufferings for mankind.*

The sufferings of Christ were of no value, as mere sufferings. There is no worth, or excellence, in the mere endurance of evil. The real merit of the sufferings of Christ, as of all other meritorious sufferings, lay in these two things: that they were undergone for a valuable End; and that they were borne by a good Mind with the spirit of Benevolence and Piety. The End, for which Christ endured the Cross, and all the other evils of his humiliation, was the best of all ends; the glory of God, and the salvation of men. The Mind of Christ is the best of all minds; and the Spirit, with which he encountered, and sustained, his sufferings, was that of supreme Benevolence and supreme Piety.

In undertaking the Office of a Mediator between God and man, he gave the most solemn and glorious testimony to the equity of the divine law in all its precepts, and in all its penalties. In enduring the sufferings, which he underwent as the substitute for sinners, he completed this testimony by cheerfully consenting, in this character, to obey, and to suffer. If he had not been perfectly holy, he would, instead of becoming a substitute for others, have

needed a substitute for himself, to expiate his sins. No supposition can be more absurd, than that Christ should make an atonement for the sins of others, when he needed an atonement for his own sins; or that God should accept him as a Mediator for sinners, when he himself was a sinner; or that he should become the means of delivering mankind from the penalty of the law, when he himself deserved to suffer that penalty.

Thus it is evident, that without consummate holiness Christ would not only have utterly failed to execute, to the divine acceptance, the office of a priest; but that he could not have entered upon that office.

IV. *To qualify him for executing the office of Intercessor.*

Absolute holiness seems entirely necessary to render the prayers of any being, even when offered up for himself, if offered in his own name, acceptable to God. The same holiness seems even more indispensable to render intercession for others accepted; and especially for a world of sinners. Such intercession, also, appears plainly to demand, as a previous and essential qualification on the part of the intercessor, that he should acknowledge, in the amplest manner, the perfect rectitude of the divine government in condemning sinners to that punishment, for their deliverance from which his intercession is undertaken. It cannot, I think, be supposed, even for a moment, that God would accept of any person in this office, who denied, doubted, or did not in the most open and complete manner acknowledge, the equity and propriety of his administrations. It seems further necessary, that he, who made this acknowledgment, should be a competent judge of the nature of the divine government; so that the acknowledgment should be made with intelligence and certainty, and not be merely a profession of faith.

The holiness of Christ, manifested in his obedience both to the preceptive and penal parts of the divine law, was the most direct and complete acknowledgment of the rectitude of the divine law, and the divine government, which was possible; because it was voluntarily undertaken, and perfectly accomplished. It was, at the same time, the obedience of a person, who was a finished judge of the nature of both, from the entire rectitude of his disposition, and the unlimited greatness of his understanding. It was, also, the acknowledgment of a person, possessed of infinite dignity, in the nature of all his attributes, in the supremacy of his station, and in the eternal and immeasurable extent of his dominion.

As an intercessor, therefore, Christ comes before his Father, both in the most amiable and the most exalted character; having confirmed, beyond all future debate, the rectitude of his law and government, and supremely glorified his name in the sight of the Universe; and pleading with divine efficacy both his obedience and his sufferings, on the behalf of those for whom he intercedes.

What must not such an Intercessor be able to obtain? From such an intercession what may not penitent sinners hope? How plain is it, that *such an high priest became us;* was fitted to expiate all our sins, and to secure to us *an inheritance undefiled and unfailing* in the everlasting love of God; an high priest *who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens!*

# SERMON LIV.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HOLINESS OF HIS CHARACTER.—IMPORTANCE OF THIS ATTRIBUTE.—HIS EXAMPLE.

1 JOHN ii. 5.—*He, that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

IN my last discourse, I considered the *Importance of the Holiness of Christ, in his character of High Priest, as being necessary to give him that distinction, without which the attention and confidence of men could not have been excited towards him; as necessary to enable him to magnify the Law of God; and to become a propitiation, and an Intercessor, for the children of Adam.*

The subject, which naturally offers itself next for our consideration, is *the Importance of this attribute to Christ, as an Example to mankind.*

That Christ was intended to be an example of righteousness to the human race is completely evident from the passage of Scripture, which I have chosen for the theme of this discourse. *He, that saith, he abideth in him;* that is, he, who professes himself a Christian; *ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* Every Christian is here required to follow the example of Christ. But every man is bound to become a Christian. Therefore, every man is required to follow the same example. *I have given you an example, said our Saviour,* when he washed his disciples' feet, *that ye should do, as I have done to you.* John xiii. 15. And again; *If any man will serve me, let him follow me.* John xii. 26. *Be ye followers of me,* says St. *Paul, even as I also am of Christ.* 1 Cor. xi. 1. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,* says the same Apostle, urging upon the Philippians the duty of humility, and arguing, at length, their obligations to be humble, from our Saviour's example. Phil. ii. 54, &c. In the like manner, he urges upon the *Romans* the character of benevolence, from the same source of argument; Rom. xv. 1, &c. and the *Hebrews* to patience and fortitude in the Christian race; Heb. xi. 1, &c. It will be useless to multiply passages, any farther, to this purpose. Even these will probably be thought to have been unnecessarily alleged.

The example of Christ is formed of his *holiness*, directed by his *wisdom*, or more properly by his *understanding*. Of all its parts, holiness is the substance, and the soul. Without this attribute, he would only have been a more sagacious sinner, and therefore a more malignant example, than other men. A proper exhibition of the example of Christ, in which its nature and usefulness are

sufficiently displayed for the present purpose, will, of course, be a proper exhibition of the importance of this attribute to Christ, in this character.

The excellence of Christ, as an example to mankind, I shall attempt to exhibit under the following heads.

I. *He was an Example of all virtue.*

By this I intend, that he was an example of piety, benevolence, and self-government, alike. This truth has been sufficiently illustrated in the two first sermons on this subject. To add any thing, therefore, to what has been so lately said, must be unnecessary.

By the Example of Christ, considered in this light, we are decisively taught, that *virtue is no partial character.* The apprehension, not unfrequently entertained, that a man may love God, and not love his neighbour, and yet be a virtuous man; that is, in the Evangelical sense; the contrary apprehension, much more frequently entertained, that a man may love his neighbour, and not love God; and the opinion, still more generally adopted, that a man may love both God and his neighbour, and thus be virtuous, while he yet does not confine his passions and appetites within scriptural bounds; are completely done away by the example of Christ. *He, that saith, he abideth in him,* is, in the text, required to *walk as he walked:* and in Rom. viii. 9, St. *Paul* declares, that *if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* But if any man *has* the spirit of Christ, it will dictate the same conduct, which it dictated to Christ. If he is Christ's, therefore; in other words, if he is a virtuous man; the subject of that holiness, of which Christ was the subject, and beside which there is no virtue; he will *walk as Christ also walked.* This is one of those commands of our Saviour, which he himself has made the test of our discipleship, and of our love to him. If therefore we are *his disciples indeed; if we love him; we shall keep* this *command;* and be, as he was, pious, benevolent, and self-governed, alike.

Further, *Christ performed all the duties of life, prompted by these three great divisions of virtue.* This conduct of our Saviour teaches us, irresistibly, that he, who does not carry the virtue, which he professes, into practice; or who does not perform those acts, or external duties, which are the proper effusions of such a spirit, as that of Christ; is not a disciple of Christ. Christ habitually prayed to God. He, who does not thus pray, is, therefore, not a disciple of Christ. Christ praised God; blessed, and gave thanks for, his food; worshipped God in his house; and celebrated all the institutions of the sanctuary. He, therefore, who does not these things, since *he walks not as Christ also walked, has not the Spirit of Christ, and is none of his.* Christ, also, universally befriended, in all the ways of justice and charity, his fellow-men, by furnishing that relief to their wants and distresses, which they needed. In vain will that man pretend to be his disciple, who is unjust in treatment of others; or who does not readily open his

heart, and his hand, to relieve his fellow-creatures in their wants and distresses; or who does not, like the Redeemer also, administer to them advice, reproof, and consolation, as they need; and employ, with sincere and tender affection, all the proper means, in his power, to promote their salvation. Christ spoke the truth, at all times, with perfect exactness. No liar, no prevaricator, no sophist, can be his disciple. Christ abstained from every fraud, and from every hard bargain; from gaming; from reproaches; from obloquy; from obscenity; from jesting with sacred things; from loose and irreverent observations concerning God; his works, word, and institutions; from all *idle words;* and from wrath, bitterness, and revenge. He who indulges himself in these, or any of these, is not Christ's disciple.

At the same time, the example of Christ, in this respect, teaches us in the most decisive manner, that he, who performs one class of these external duties, and neglects the others; or who abstains from one class of sins, and commits another; is not a disciple of Christ. For example; a man may pay his debts; speak truth; and give alms to the poor; yet, if he does not pray to God in his closet, his family, and the church, he is not a disciple of Christ.

Generally, the example of Christ teaches us, beyond a debate, what may, indeed, be clearly proved from the nature of the subject, that *virtue has not, and cannot have, a partial existence.* No man can love God, without loving his neighbour; or his neighbour, without loving God; or both, without restraining his passions and appetites. He, who supposes himself to do one of these things, when he does not the others, is guilty of a gross self-deception; and is employed in preventing his own attainment of eternal life.

II. *Christ was an example to all classes of men.*

It ought, I think, rationally to be expected, as plainly it ought to be most earnestly desired, that the person, intended by God to be the great pattern of righteousness to mankind, *should so appear, and live, and act, in the world, as to become such a pattern to men of every description.* Such a pattern Christ has in fact become; a fact, derived, in a great measure, from *the lowly circumstances, in which he was born, lived, and died.*

Had our Saviour appeared, as the *Jews* expected him to appear, in the character of a prince, and conqueror, reigning with unprecedented splendour, perpetual triumph, and universal dominion; he would, as an example, have been useful to but few of mankind; and to them in comparatively few respects. The great and splendid, only, would have been materially benefitted; and even they, in but a small part of the truly excellent human characteristics. In the seat of splendour and dominion, certain exercises of virtue may be exhibited with peculiar advantage; such, for instance, as are attendant on the just and wise administrations of government, and the honourable distributions of princely favour. But these are chiefly such, as few of mankind have it in their power to imitate.

Men in exalted stations; princes, nobles, and statesmen; may, indeed, learn wisdom, worth, and dignity of character, from these attributes, when displayed in a superior manner by persons, occupying places of superior distinction. *How few persons* derive moral advantages from reading the actions of kings and conquerors, recorded in general history, compared with the *multitudes*, who are seriously profited by a single instance of well conducted biography?

In the humble station, which Christ actually occupied, *all his excellencies* were, and are plainly seen to have been, merely *personal;* springing from nothing accidental; blended with nothing adventitious; the inherent excellencies, and the natural emanations, of his own goodness of character; neither enhanced, nor obscured, by the dazzling glare of office; nor liable to any misapprehensions of ours from that prejudiced awe, that imposing veneration, with which we are prone to regard the great. The virtues of Christ were, in the strictest sense, all his own; the excellencies of an Intelligent being merely; of a man, unincumbered with office, place, or power, or any other of those gaudy trappings, in our attention to which, just views of the real character are apt to be perplexed, or lost. These excellencies constitute an example for man, *as such;* and are, therefore, fitted to Instruct, and improve, every child of *Adam*.

To the *great* he became a glorious pattern of that condescension, meekness, and humility, which they ordinarily need in a peculiar manner, to learn; and which, when learned, is their prime ornament and glory. When kings and nobles behold *him*, who was declared by a voice from heaven to be *the Beloved Son* of God; and who, on earth, commanded the winds and the waves, and raised the dead to life; characterizing himself as *meek and lowly of heart*, and retiring into a desert to avoid the offer of a throne; it is impossible, that they should not feel, unless lost to rational sentiments, their own pride, haughtiness, and irritability, strongly reproved. If they have hearts open to rational conviction, and not dead to virtuous impressions, it is impossible for them not to feel, that the meekness and lowliness of mind, which in the Redeemer were so excellent and exalted, must, of course, constitute the highest amiableness and exaltation of their own characters.

*To men of inferior classes*, down to the peasant and the beggar, the slave and the child, Christ is an universal example. In all the excellencies of which they are capable, or which are compatible with their circumstances, Christ has gone before them, as a glorious original, which they are required unceasingly to copy. The pattern is distinct; it can therefore be clearly seen. It is exactly suited to their circumstances; with a suitable disposition it can, therefore, be easily followed. It is faultless; and can, therefore, conduct them to no sin. It is sublime and lovely; and allures, therefore, irresistibly to virtue.

When we remember, that men of these classes constitute almost

all the human race; when we remember, that among them are found almost all those, who are willing to follow any virtuous example; when we remember, that Christ, by appearing, and living in humble circumstances, has furnished a perfect pattern of righteousness to this part of mankind, and consulted in this efficacious manner their highest good: when we remember, that he has, at the same time, with equal efficacy, pursued the best interest of the remaining class; those in exalted stations; by recommending to them the virtues, which they most need to be taught: we shall see, in the clearest manner, the perfect wisdom of the Redeemer, in condescending to appear in so humble a character. *To the Jews* this was *a stumbling block;* to Infidels it has been *foolishness. But the foolishness of God is* in this, as in all other respects, *wiser than men.*

*To Ministers of the Gospel* the example of Christ commends itself with peculiar energy. Christ himself was a Minister of the Gospel; sent by his Father in the same manner, in which he has sent them. As a Ruler in his Church; as a Preacher, and a Pattern, of Righteousness; he is the great Archetype, of which they are bound to be as exact copies, as it shall be in their power to become. It ought, here, to be observed, that Christ, not improbably to render his example more useful to them by adapting it more to their circumstances, and their capacity of imitation, has, in this respect, acted almost only in the character of a mere man, and not as the Searcher of hearts, nor as the Lawgiver of his Church. Where he has acted otherwise, the distinction is so clearly and successfully made, that it may usually be understood without difficulty. His example in this, as in all his private conduct, is that of a mere, though perfect, man; is, of course, easily transferred to the practical concerns of every Minister, and is both understood, and followed, without perplexity. Ministers, therefore, are peculiarly without excuse, if they are not followers of Christ.

I shall only add, on this part of the subject, that the example of Christ *is to all men authoritative.* It is not merely a bright and beautiful pattern, which we are invited to copy, because this conduct will be pleasing, honourable, and useful to us; but it is a law, also; requiring of us, with divine authority, to *go, and do likewise.* Our obligation to obey is indispensable. Nor can any man be excused for a moment, who does not labour faithfully to resemble Christ in all the merely personal and moral parts of his character.

III. *The example of Christ was perfect.*

By this I intend, that in all cases *he did exactly that, and that only, which was right.* The truth of this observation I have sufficiently illustrated in a former discourse. Nothing more, therefore, will be necessary on this subject, at the present time, than to show its application, and usefulness, to the concerns of mankind. Regarded in this light, Christ is, to us, a finished standard of moral excellence; and as such has taught us,

1st. *What we ought to be.*

In the progress of these discourses, I have endeavoured to show the manner in which Christ walked; in which he glorified God, and did good to men. The two great commands of the moral law, which regulate, or should regulate, the conduct of all Intelligent creatures, are, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.*

In conformity with the first of these commands, God held the supreme place in his views and affections. He came into the world to accomplish a work, which his Father had appointed him. This work, in all its parts, he steadily pursued, while he was in the world; and, when he left the world, his work was done: so that he was able to say at the close of life, *Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do.* But he did *nothing else.* When he left the world, he left nothing unfinished, and nothing superadded. The end of all which he did, or said, or thought, was the glory of his Father. This end he accomplished; and, in the pursuit, left *himself* out of consideration; cheerfully subordinating to it his own convenience, pleasure, and comfort; and cheerfully undergoing every trouble, difficulty, and danger. The whole language of his heart, on which the whole language of his life was a glorious comment, was, *Not my will, but thine, be done!* This is the pattern, which we should set always before us; this the piety, at which we should unceasingly aim.

To *Mankind*, also, he yielded himself, to promote their comfort, relieve their distresses, and secure their salvation. God is always glorified, when good is voluntarily done to mankind; and was in this manner singularly glorified by Christ. He taught men truth and righteousness. He taught them all the doctrines which they needed to know, and all the duties which they were required to perform, for the attainment of eternal life. At all times he prayed for them, even while he was agonizing on the cross; and wrought for them, with extreme self-denial, many wonderful and beneficent miracles. In a word, he lived in such a manner, that even his hard-hearted, unbelieving, and malignant countrymen were compelled to say, *He hath done all things well.*

In the mean time, *he did nothing ill.* He never omitted a duty, nor committed a sin. He was neither idle, nor vain. He neither flattered nor slandered, neither deceived nor defrauded, neither corrupted nor neglected, his fellow-men. By their favour he was not enticed; by their resentment he was not awed. His mind indulged no wrath; his bosom harboured no revenge. Boldly and uniformly, without fear and without fondness, he told the truth, and did that which was kind, just, and right.

To friends he was never partial; to enemies he was never resentful. In his virtues he was not rigid; in his doctrines not severe;

in his worship not superstitious: but in all was rational, gentle, meek, faithful, self-possessed, and sublimely excellent.

He was born in an age, in which *pure, undefiled religion* had wonderfully decayed, and given place to an almost absolute round of superstitious and vain *externities*. Whenever men rely on these observances for acceptance with God, they resign of course all ideas of *internal purity*. He who expects that *washing of hands* will give him a title to heaven, will never concern himself with *cleansing his heart*. In such a state of things, wickedness of every kind will triumph; all the doctrines of Religion will be modelled to the views and feelings of those, who practise it; and the whole system of faith will become a complication of folly, falsehood, authoritative dogmas, and implicit submissions of credulity. But in an age, and country, distinguished by these evils more than, perhaps, any other, Christ uniformly and victoriously resisted them all. He received no doctrine, he required his hearers to receive none, except when known and proved by unanswerable evidence, to be from heaven. All his own instructions he proved in this manner. Not an instance can be produced, in which he used *the argument from authority*. In his conduct there is not an example of superstition, enthusiasm, or bigotry. Harmless enjoyments he never refused; sinful ones he never indulged. No man was the better, or the worse treated by him, on account of the sect, party, or nation, to which he belonged.

In his beneficence he was a glorious example to all men. His affections were literally universal: and his beneficence was an exact expression of his affections. As it was dictated by no idle dreams of Philosophy, by no cobweb system of abstraction, but by plain, practical truth; it was real, useful, uniformly honourable to himself, and invariably profitable to mankind. He never spent his time in sending his thoughts abroad to distant countries, to inquire what errors, abuses, or sufferings, existed there, which demanded correction, reformation, or relief. He did not sit down in the exercise of vain philanthropy, to employ life in unavailing sighs, and tears, for the sufferings of distant countries, and ages; nor give himself up to the useless despair of doing *any* good to mankind, because he could not do *all* which their circumstances required. He did not satisfy himself with lamenting the distresses of his fellow-men, and teaching others to relieve them. In a manner, directly opposed to this visionary, useless philosophy, he made his whole life a life of the most active beneficence. Instead of seeking for objects of charity in *Persia*, or at *Rome*, he found them in his own Country; on the spot, where he was; among the sufferers, daily presented to his eyes. During his private life, he contributed by his daily efforts to support, and befriend, the family of his Father. Throughout his ministry, he took an effectual and daily charge of his own family of disciples; and travelled unceasingly from one place to another, to find new objects, on whom his

kindness might be successfully employed. Thus he *loved* mankind, *not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.* The weight of his example is, in this respect, singular; because the great purposes of his mission were more extensive, more absolutely general, than any which ever entered into the human mind. Like his views, his benevolence, also, was in the absolute sense universal. Yet he spent his life in doing good within the sphere, in which he lived, and to the objects, within his reach. Thus he has taught us irresistibly, that, instead of consuming our time in wishes to do good, where we cannot, the true dictate of universal good-will is to do it where we can.

At the same time, he *denied all ungodliness and worldly lusts.* No avaricious, ambitious, proud, or sensual desire, found a place in his mind. Every selfish aim was excluded from his heart; every unworthy act, from his life. Omniscience itself, looking into his soul with a perfect survey, saw nothing but pure excellence, supreme beauty, and divine loveliness: a sun without a spot: a splendour, formed of mere diversities of light and glory.

The perfection of this wonderful example we cannot expect, nor hope, to attain: but a character of the same nature we may, and, if we would be interested in the favour of God, we must, acquire. Like him, we must consecrate ourselves absolutely to the glorification of God. Like him, we must willingly, and alway do good. Like him, we must steadily resist temptation, and overcome iniquity.

Obedience, and not pleasure, must be the commanding object of our purposes. The pleasure, at which we supremely aim, must be, not the pleasure of sense; but *the peace, which passeth all understanding; the joy which no stranger meddles withal;* a self-approving mind; the consciousness of personal worth; the enjoyment of virtuous excellence; accompanied, and cherished, by a glorious hope of the final approbation of God, and an eternal residence in his house, in the heavens.

2dly. *The example of Christ teaches us how far the character of mankind is from what it ought to be.*

We are often told very flattering things concerning the dignity and worth of man; the number and splendour of his virtues; and the high moral elevation to which he has attained. The errors, into which we fall in forming this estimate of the human character, are, together with many others respecting our own character, the consequence of referring the conduct of ourselves, and our fellow-men, to a false standard of moral excellence. No man ever intends to rise above the standard, which he prescribes for himself. All men expect to fall below it. If the standard, then, be too low; their character will be lower still. If it be imperfect; their life will be more imperfect. If it be erroneous; their conduct, under its influence, will err still more extensively. The true aim of every man ought to be pointed at perfection. Of perfection he

will, indeed, fall short; but his life will be more excellent, than if he aimed at any inferior mark. For this reason, probably, among others, the Scriptures have directed us to make the attainment of perfection our daily, as well as ultimate, aim.

The formation of a defective standard of excellence was one of the predominant errors, and mischiefs, of the ancient philosophy. The wise man of the *Stoics*, *Platonists*, and *Peripatetics*, felt himself to be all that he ought to be, because he so grossly misconceived of what he ought to be. Proud; vain; impious to the Gods; a liar; an adulterer; and even a Sodomite; he still boasted of his morality and piety, just as the Stoic boasted of his happiness, while writhing under the pangs of the colic, or the gout. The reason plainly was: he believed all these enormities to be consistent with the character of a Wise man. *Cicero* thought *war*, (that is, the butchery of mankind, and the devastation of human happiness) when undertaken for the love of glory, and unstained with peculiar cruelty, *justifiable*. Why? Because he had previously determined *the love of glory to be virtue*, or the real excellence of man; and therefore concluded, that the means of indulging, and gratifying, this passion, must be, at least, consistent with virtue. In the same manner, men of all descriptions, when they have formed to themselves a false standard of excellence, are satisfied, if they only embrace the errors, and commit the sins, which that standard allows; and will in fact embrace more errors, and commit more sins.

He, who will compare himself with the perfect standard of virtue, furnished by the life of Christ, will see at once, and without a doubt, how far his character falls below what God has required. The best man living will, in this case, cordially unite with *Paul* in exclaiming, *O wretched man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* and, with *Job*, humbled by the immediate presence of God, in the kindred exclamation, *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* "How different," will he say, "is my life from that of the Redeemer! How different the heart, from which it has been derived! *To me belongeth shame and confusion of face, because I have sinned, and done this great wickedness.* But to thee, O Divine Saviour of men, be *blessing, and honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*"

If such be the state of the best, in the light of this comparison, what must be the state of others? What of men, who feel themselves to be, not only decent, but in a good degree virtuous, and safe? What shall be said of him, who neglects the worship of God in his family, or closet; who attends in the sanctuary, occasionally only, and is inattentive to the worship, when present; who neglects the relief of the poor and distressed; who justifies lying, in certain circumstances; who uses sophistry; who makes hard bargains; who preaches moral essays, effusions of genius, and metaphysical disquisitions, instead of the Gospel; and himself, his re-

sentments, or his flattery, instead of Christ; who wastes his time in light and fanciful reading; or devotes life to amusement, instead of duty? All these, and all other similar, persons, are contrasts to the character of Christ, and not resemblances. They *walk* not *as Christ walked. The same mind is* not *in them which was in Christ.*

The meek and lowly virtues were peculiarly the virtues of the Redeemer. By this I mean, that he exhibited them most frequently, urged them most extensively and forcibly, and described his own character as being formed of them in a peculiar degree. The proud, therefore, the vain, the insolent, the wrathful, and the revengeful, are irresistibly compelled, when they read his character, to know that they are *none of his.*

IV. *The example of Christ was highly edifying.*

By this I intend, that it was of such a nature, as strongly to induce, and persuade, mankind to follow him. On this part of the subject, interesting as it is, I can make but a few observations.

*The example of Christ was singular.* No other, corresponding with it, has ever appeared in the present world. The best of men are only faint and distant copies of his excellence. When exhibited by him, it was a novelty; and has, since, been always new, as well as always delightful. In this view, it is formed to engage attention, and command a peculiar regard.

*It was the example of an extraordinary person;* who taught wonderful wisdom, lived a wonderful life, and wrought wonderful miracles. Such a person naturally compels, beyond any other, our admiration and respect; an admiration, mightily enhanced by a consideration of the circumstances, in which he was born and lived; the humble education which he received; the lowly condition and character of those with whom he consorted; the superiority of his precepts and life to those of all who went before him; and their total opposition to those of his own contemporaries. All these considerations lead us to a full and affecting conviction, that his wisdom was self-derived, and his life the mere result of his own unrivalled virtue. Accordingly, all these facts astonished those, who lived around him; and have filled with wonder men of every succeeding age.

*The example of Christ was an example of benevolence only.* All his employments were directed to no other earthly end, than the promotion of human happiness. His miracles were directed only to such objects, as feeding the hungry, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and restoring life to the dead. His precepts, and his life, terminated in illuminating the soul, diminishing the power of sin, invigorating virtue, and securing the salvation of men.

*It was the example, also, of a person struggling with suffering and sorrow, unceasing obloquy and bitter persecution.* The heathen could say, "The Gods themselves behold not a nobler spec-

tacle, than a good man, firmly enduring Adversity." Christ was supremely good; and encountered extreme Adversity. The patience with which he submitted, and the firmness with which he endured, invest his character with greatness, to which there is no parallel. The fire of persecution, instead of consuming him, merely lent its gloomy lustre, to show the splendour of the object, which it surrounded.

*It was the example of a person, employed in accomplishing the greatest work, which was ever done, and introducing into the universe the most extensive good, which it ever beheld.* There is a moral grandeur, a divine sublimity, in this employment of Christ, at which the mind gazes with wonder, and is lost; which Angels behold with amazement and rapture; and which eternity itself will hardly be able to unfold to a created understanding.

*It is the example of a person, devoting all his labours, and undergoing all his sufferings, for the benefit of others, and proffering with an open hand the immense good, which he procured at an immense price, to strangers, sinners, apostates, enemies to himself, and children of perdition.* Not for himself, but for guilty, ruined men, he was born, lived, laboured, suffered through life, and expired on the cross. To every one, who is willing to be like him, he shut the prison of wo, and opened the gates of heaven.

*It is an example, in itself pre-eminently beautiful and lovely.* His meekness, gentleness, humility, compassion, and universal sweetness of disposition, are not less distinguished, than his greatness and glory. *Solomon*, beholding his character in distant vision, exclaimed, *He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely!* *David*, in prophetic view of the excellence of his life, exclaimed, *Thou art fairer than the Sons of men!* GOD THE FATHER, beholding him with infinite complacency, announced his character to the world with a voice from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* To these divine declarations all virtuous beings have subjoined their Amen.

*Finally; it is an example, in which divine wisdom and excellence united with the most perfect human mind; coinciding with all its designs, and guiding it to unmingled excellence.* To the amiableness and beauty of the most finished created virtue, were superadded, and united, the authority and greatness of the Divinity, by which that Mind was inhabited. The combination, therefore, was a combination of all that is lovely with all that is awful, exalted, and divine. What mind, that can be persuaded from sin, must not this Example persuade? What mind, that can be allured to holiness, must not this Example allure?

# SERMON LV.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS ATONEMENT.

ROMANS. iii. 24—26. *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

IN a former discourse, I proposed to consider, as parts of the Priesthood of Christ,

*The Holiness of his character:*

*The Sacrifice, which he offered for sin:* and,

*The Intercession which he makes for sinners.*

*The first* of these subjects has been examined at length. The present discourse shall be occupied by *the second.*

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST FOR THE SINS OF MEN.

In considering this subject I shall endeavour to show,

I. *The Nature;*

II. *The Necessity;* and,

III. *The Existence; of an atonement for sin:*

IV. *The Manner, in which it was performed:* and,

V. *Its Extent.*

I. *I shall attempt to show the Nature of an Atonement.*

The word *Atonement,* in its original sense, always denotes some amends, or satisfaction, for the neglect of some duty, or the commission of some fault: a satisfaction, with which, when supposed to be complete, the person injured ought reasonably to be contented, and to demand of the offender nothing more on account of his transgression. This satisfaction may, in certain cases, be made by the offender himself. Whenever he has owed some piece of service, and this was all he has owed, he may, if he have failed to perform this duty, atone for the fault by a future service, which he did not owe; and which is equivalent to that which he neglected, and to the damage occasioned by his neglect. A servant, who owes an estimated day's work to his master, every day, may, if he have neglected to work half a day, atone, thus, for his fault by such future labour, as shall be equivalent to the extent of his neglect, and to the injury occasioned by it to his Master. In this case it will be seen, that the atonement respects only the fault, which has been committed. The servant owed his master so much labour. The payment of so much labour would be a discharge, therefore, of the debt. But we do not say, that the debt in this case is atoned. The fault, only, which has been committed in

neglecting, or refusing, to pay in the proper season, and manner, demands, or admits, of an atonement. In every other case where an atonement exists, it is in the same manner a satisfaction for an injury, or fault.

In some cases, the party offending cannot atone for his offence, but the atonement, if made at all, must be made *vicariously*, that is, *by the intervention of a third person between the offender and the offended.* Of this nature is every case, in which the offender owes, as absolutely, every duty, which he could afterwards perform, as he owed that, the non-performance of which constituted his fault. In this case, all his future efforts are necessarily due for the time being; and can, therefore, never become a satisfaction for faults, which are past. Amends for an injury can never be made by services, which are due to the injured person on other grounds, and the refusal of which would constitute a new injury. In other words, they must be services, rendered only on account of the injury, already received. He, therefore, who owes to another all his services for himself, can never become the means of atoning to him for the faults of another. In all cases of vicarious atonement, *the substitute* must be under no personal obligation to render the services, which are to be accepted as a satisfaction of *the principal;* or in other words *the offender.* Nothing is more plain, than that what is due for *himself*, cannot be transferred to the account of *another.* In every case of personal, or vicarious, atonement, *the services rendered must be of such value; as to become a reasonable, and full, satisfaction for the injury done:* all, that justice can fairly demand, or render: such, as will place the person injured in as good a situation, as that, which preceded the injury. Where the injury has been great, therefore, or multiplied, the services must also be proportionally great.

*An atonement for a crime, committed against a Government, of any kind, supposes the offender, if he is to receive the benefit of it, to be pardoned.* In this case, it must be such, as to leave the Government in as good a state, as firm, as honourable, as easily and surely efficacious in its future operations, after the offender is pardoned, as it would have been, if he had been punished with exact justice. In no other manner can it become a satisfaction for the injury. If all the services of the offender, in this case, were due to the Government, after his crime was committed; it would be impossible for the atonement to be made, unless by another person.

*Sin* is a crime, *committed against the Government of God.* All the services of sinners are owed to God, for the time being. No future services of any sinner, therefore, can be any satisfaction for his past sins. If an atonement be made in this case, then, it must be made by a substitute; and this substitute must be able to render services, of sufficient value to repair the injury done. In the performance of these services he must leave the Divine Government

as firm, as honourable, as efficacious in its operations, after the atonement is made, as it was before the crime was committed.

It will, perhaps, be objected here, that the Divine Government cannot become less firm, or less honourable, than it originally was; because it is supported in its full strength by Infinite power and wisdom. To this objection I answer, that the Government of God over his moral creatures is *a moral Government;* that is, a Government of rules and motives; or of laws, rewards, and punishments. Such a Government, even in the hand of Omnipotence, may become weak and inefficacious, in the view of its subjects. A law, which, after it has been violated, is not vindicated by punishing the violator, loses, of course, a part of its authority. A moral Governor will cease to be regarded with veneration, if, when he is insulted by his subjects, he does not inflict on them the proper punishment. A Government of *mere power* may be upheld in its full strength by the exercise of power only. But a moral Government cannot be thus preserved, unless the motives to obedience are continued, to the view of its subjects, in their full force. An atonement for sin, therefore, that is, a complete atonement, must be such, as to leave these motives wholly unimpaired. It must consist of such services, as, whatever else may be their nature, will, after the sinners are pardoned, leave the Government of God in no degree less venerable, less efficacious, or less likely to be punctually obeyed, than before the sins were committed. As these sins have been numerous, and very great; it is further evident, that the services, rendered as a satisfaction for them, must be of great value.

II. *I shall endeavour to show the Necessity of an Atonement.*

In order to understand this part of the subject, and I forwarn my hearers that it is a part, of high importance to the subject itself, and to all just views of the Christian system, it will be necessary to bring up to view the state of man, as a transgressor of the divine law.

The language of this law, and its only language, was, *He that doth these things shall live by them. This do, and thou shalt live. Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the Law, to do them.* This law God published, as the rule, by which his own infinite wisdom and rectitude determined to govern the world. Of course, it is a right and just rule. Of course also, it is a rule, which the same wisdom and rectitude are pledged to maintain in its full force. The very reasons, for which it was enacted, require with their full strength, that it should be also maintained. If it was wise and right to enact it, it was equally wise and right to maintain it. If to enact it was the dictate of Infinite wisdom and rectitude; to maintain it must equally be the dictate of the same attributes.

If these observations be admitted; and it is believed that they cannot be refused an admission; it follows, of necessity, that no sinner can be forgiven, consistently with this law, or the honour of the Lawgiver, unless on the ground of an Atonement. In the law

he had declared, that *the soul which sinneth shall die*. To pardon the sinner, without any change from that state of things, which existed when the law was published, would be to declare, by declining to carry the sentence of the law into execution, that Infinite wisdom and rectitude had formed new views concerning the sentence of the law, and the demerit of the sinner; views, contrary to those with which the law was published. When the law was published, God declared, that the sinner should die. Now he must declare, by pardoning the sinner, that he should not die. Yet no change in the state of things had taken place; nor is any supposed to have taken place; to occasion this change in the divine conduct. No reason is even supposed, why the conduct of God should be thus changed. The change itself must, of course, be wanton, causeless, and disgraceful to the divine character. If the law was *originally* just, it was *now* just. Justice, therefore, required the execution of its penalty upon every transgressor. In pardoning the transgressor, God would declare, that the law was not just; in direct contradiction to the declaration, which he made of its justice, when he published it, as the rule, by which he intended to govern the world. If the Law was originally *wise;* it must now be wise to execute it. But in pardoning the sinner God must declare, that the execution of the Law was not consistent with wisdom. If the Law was originally *good;* that is, formed by a benevolent mind, so as to promote benevolent purposes; it was now equally good. But in pardoning the sinner God must declare, that the execution of the law was inconsistent with the dictates of benevolence. The change, therefore, manifested in the divine character, and conduct, by pardoning the sinner, where no change of circumstances existed to justify it, would, on the one hand, be great and essential; no less than God's denying himself; and, on the other, would be causeless, weak, and contemptible. Can such a change be attributed, even in thought, to the immutable and perfect Jehovah?

In the Law, God had manifested an infinite love to holiness, and an infinite hatred to sin; or, if the language should be preferred, a supreme love to the one, and a supreme hatred to the other. But, to pardon the sinner, without any change in the state of things, would be to treat the sinner and the faithful subject exactly in the same manner; or to treat the sinner in the same manner, as if he had faithfully obeyed. Declarations, made by conduct, are altogether the most solemn and efficacious of all declarations. In this conduct, therefore, God would in the most solemn manner declare, that he regarded holiness and sin alike; because he treated the sinner and the saint alike; and that neither of them was an object of his serious regard. The views of a lawgiver are always expressed in the whole of his Government, taken together; and from this cannot but be distinctly understood. If his Laws are unwise; *he* will be pronounced to be unwise. If his administration be unwise; he will be considered as sustaining the same character. If

*either* of them be unjust; he will be pronounced to be unjust. If they be inconsistent; inconsistency will necessarily be attributed to his character. How perfect a violation would this conduct be of the attributes of justice, wisdom, and immutability!

At the same time, all subjects of the Divine Government would be encouraged to disobedience by these proofs of a changeable, weak, and inconsistent character. Angels, we know, *can* disobey. This is complete proof, that all inferior creatures are capable of the same disobedience. Angels *have* disobeyed; when, at least, they supposed the law to mean exactly what it threatens; and without the least hope, founded on any declaration of God, of any possible exemption from the penalty, actually denounced. Man also disobeyed in the same circumstances. Both also revolted, when antecedently, they had been only, and perfectly, holy. In these facts we have complete evidence, that no class of holy beings, is secure from disobedience, even under a law, which gives not a single encouragement to escape to those who disobey. Should such encouragement, then, be holden out by the actual forgiveness, much more by the universal forgiveness, of the penitent, without an atonement, who might not be expected to rebel? Who, when temptation powerfully assailed, and the wish to sin was strongly excited, would not feel assured of his own future repentance, and his consequent safety from future punishment?

Of such beings, as men now are, it ought to be observed, that they themselves furnish ample proof of what might be rationally expected under such a dispensation. This will appear, if we consider,

1st. That the atonement of Christ has completely opened the door, for the exemption of all penitents from the punishment, threatened by the law; and yet, that the number of those, who really repent, is ordinarily very small, compared with the number of those, who transgress.

2dly. That not even one of these becomes a penitent, of his own accord; as the Scriptures abundantly assure us; but assumes this character, only in consequence of the immediate influence of the Divine Spirit upon his heart.

3dly. That, of this number, few, very few, are ever awakened, or convinced, by the encouragements and promises of the Gospel; but almost all by the denunciations of the law. The blessings of immortality, the glories of heaven, are usually, to say the least, preached, with little efficacy, to an assembly of sinners. I have been surprised to see how dull, inattentive, and sleepy, such an assembly has been, amidst the strongest representations of these Divine subjects, combining the most vivid images with a vigorous style, and an impressive elocution.

4thly. That those persons, who disbelieve a future punishment, are distinguished by a licentiousness of character, even beyond other licentious men. Repentance, and religion, are certainly never

seen by the common eye among infidels, or universalists; and no revival of religion, no considerable prevalence of religion, has, so far as I know, been the consequence of preaching *Unitarian* doctrines.

All these are direct proofs, that men, who now sin so extensively and perseveringly, would, if the denunciations of the Law were proved to be false, by the extension of forgiveness to sinners without an atonement, sin with a harder heart, with a bolder hand, and throughout a more uniformly guilty life.

*Restraint* is a necessary part of every law, and every government: *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further*, being invariably the language of both. All restraint is a hindrance of inclination; a prohibition of the indulgence of desire. In itself, it is always regarded as an evil; and is really such, whenever it does not prevent some other evil or accomplish some good. *Adam*, in a state of innocence, in the end considered the prohibition of the forbidden tree as an evil. We, with sinful propensities only, should undoubtedly regard, and naturally do in fact regard, every restraint in the same manner. If, then, God were *not* to execute the sentence of the law upon us for our transgressions, but were to forgive the sinner without an atonement, we should undoubtedly sin, not only invariably, but with a boldness, constancy, and extent, not often seen, even in this guilty world.

If any person should think this conclusion harsh, and severe; let him remember how soon after the apostacy mankind, in the possession of long life, and abundant enjoyments, forgot the loss of their immortality; and corrupted themselves, to such a degree, that the infinitely benevolent Author of their being thought it necessary to sweep away the whole human race, except one family, with the besom of Destruction. Let him remember how little reformation followed the overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah;* or the terrible plagues of *Egypt*. Let him remember, that the *Israelites* worshipped a calf, at the foot of Mount *Sinai;* and sunk into all the abominations of the *Canaanites*, as soon as the generation, which destroyed them, had gone to the grave. Let him remember, that, amid all the judgments, and mercies, which they received, they apostatized from God, at the end of every little period, and were finally given up, as hopeless, to captivity and ruin. Let him remember, that their descendants crucified Christ; and that, after the sufferings of eighteen hundred years, and those extreme, they are still unbelieving, impenitent, and harder than the nether millstone. Let him remember, finally, how soon the Christian world itself degenerated into idolatry, impurity, persecution, forgetfulness of God, a general corruption of Christianity, and a general dissolution of morals. With these things in his view, it will be impossible for him to think the conclusion, which I have drawn, either unwarrantable, or unkind.

But it may be said, that *although all these evils might indeed take*

*place, if God should pardon sinners without repentance; still the forgiveness of penitents involves no such consequence.* To this allegation, which I believe to be made by almost every human heart, I answer,

1st. *The threatening of the law against transgression is absolute. The soul that sinneth shall die.* In this threatening there is no mention, and plainly no admission, of repentance, as the foundation of escape to the transgressor. If an exception was intended to be made in favour of the penitent; why was it not expressed, or at least hinted, by the law? There is not, that I know, a single intimation, of this nature, in any of the expressions, which it contains. Should it be said, that, although this exception is not made in the words of the *law itself*, yet it is sufficiently declared in the *Comments on the law*, given us by *Moses* and the succeeding prophets; I answer, that, wherever these Commentators speak of repentance, as connected with our escape from the curse of the law, they speak of it, either as connected with the atonement of Christ, or not. If they mention it, as connected with this atonement; then the Objector will be obliged to admit, that the atonement itself is the foundation of the Penitent's escape. If they do *not* speak of it as connected with the atonement, then it follows, that the penitent is pardoned, *under the law*, or *legal dispensation.* An act of pardon is an act of grace; and no act is more eminently gracious, or free. To this grace the Gospel can add, and does in fact add, nothing material. *Grace*, therefore, *came*, according to this supposition, originally by *Moses*, and not by Christ, and the *Gospel* is not the *good news*, or the *glad tidings* of *the grace of God;* as it is often styled by the writers of it; because the tidings which it professes to bring, were long before published by the law.

Further; it will not be in this case true, that *heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot, or one tittle, of the law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.* Not only one jot, or one tittle, but the whole penal sentence, of the law is, according to this scheme, left, and will for ever be left, unfulfilled; without any other reason to forbid its fulfilment, beside what existed, and was known to exist, at the time when it was published to the world.

2dly. *The absolute threatening of the law was denounced by God in the exercise of his infinite perfections.* When he denounced it, therefore, in this manner, that is, unconditionally, he acted wisely and justly. The denunciation he intended either to execute, or not. If he did not intend to execute it, he acted, so far as I am able to discern, insincerely; because in publishing it he declared, that he *would do* what he intended *not to do.* If he intended to execute it, he will certainly execute it; because no reason exists, in the case supposed, to forbid the execution, which did not exist in his view, when he published the threatening. It will not be denied, that he foresaw every instance of repentance, which would

afterwards be exhibited by mankind. As God is immutable; it must, at the least, be conceded, that he cannot be supposed to change his determinations, in any case, especially a case of such importance, where no reason whatever exists for the change, beside those which existed when the determination was made.

3dly. *The repentance of the sinner cannot be an atonement for his crime.* Repentance consists in sorrow for sin; confession of it; an acknowledgment of the justice of God in punishing it; resolutions of future obedience; and actual reformation. These things undoubtedly constitute an important change in the character of the sinner; but they alter not the nature, or degree, of the guilt which he has already incurred. For *this* he is condemned; and for this, even according to his own penitential views, he has merited punishment. In what manner does his present penitence affect this guilt? Certainly in no such sense, as to lessen its degree, or desert of punishment. In what manner, then, can it prevent him from being punished? Plainly in none, except that, which will make amends for the evils, which he has committed; the dishonour, which he has done to the law, and government, of God. But what is there, in his repentance, which can make these amends? In what manner will it discover, that the character of God, in threatening punishment to his sins, and declining, on account of a repentance originally foreseen, to inflict that punishment, was the same character; or that God, when he threatened the punishment, and when he refused to execute it, regarded holiness and sin in one unchangeable manner? Will his sorrow for sin make it cease to be sin? Will the confession of his guilt make him cease to be guilty? Will his acknowledgment of the justice of the punishment, which he has deserved, make it cease to be just? Will his resolutions of amendment, or his actual reformation, efface, or lessen, the guilt of his past life? None of these things will, I suppose, be pretended. How, then, can the repentance of a sinner become a proper ground for his forgiveness, and acceptance? If he is actually forgiven, on this ground, it cannot but be seen, and will with truth be said, that God, in the formation and the administration of his law, has acted inconsistently; and that either the law was unjust and unreasonable, or that his failure to execute it was unwise and dishonourable to himself. For this evil, which, for aught that appears, may be great beyond any assignable limit, this scheme furnishes, so far as I can see, no remedy.

But it may be further asked, *Would it not be more honourable to God, or at least equally honourable, to forgive the penitent, without an Atonement? Whence is it, that suffering, or punishment, becomes necessary to the establishment of his glory in the Government of the Universe?*

To these questions I answer, that it ill becomes a creature of yesterday to employ himself in contriving a government for the Universe; or a system of regulations, by which the Author of the

Universe may direct his immense and eternal administration. Even to understand that state of things, which really exists, is, in a few instances only, possible for us; and, in almost all, utterly transcends the extent of our faculties. A little child would be very absurdly employed in contriving a system of government for a kingdom, or in forming decisions concerning the wisdom or folly, the justice or injustice, by which it was governed. The Universe is more disproportioned to the powers of a man, than a kingdom to those of a child; and the government of God as absolutely transcends the comprehension of an Angel, as that of a prince exceeds the understanding of a child. An attempt to answer these questions, therefore, must be, and from the nature of the case, be seen to be, lame, imperfect, and in many respects unsatisfactory. Nothing more can be expected on this subject by a sober man, than a removal, or diminution, of some of the most obvious doubts; and even this, perhaps, may be attempted in vain. Let it be remembered, however, that the difficulties, attendant upon our inquiries in the present case, arise, not from any perceptible absurdity of what we know, but from the mere inexplicableness of what we do not know; from *the nature of the subject*, in itself free from all absurdity, but incomprehensible by such minds as ours.

With these things premised, I will suggest, as a direct, but partial, answer to these inquiries, the following observations.

1st. *We are prejudiced judges of this subject.* Our own case, and that a case immensely interesting to us, is concerned. Where we have interests depending, of very moderate importance, our judgments usually are partial. Here they must of course be extremely partial.

2dly. *No government of the Universe can become the character of the Creator, except a moral government.* A government *of force* would be absolutely destitute of any moral excellence, or any intellectual glory. The ruler, so far as he was obeyed, would be obeyed only from fear, and never from confidence, or love. This is the obedience of a slave; as the government would be that of a tyrant. It is unnecessary to multiply words, to prove, that in this case the ruler could never be reverenced, nor loved, by his subjects; or that his subjects could never be virtuous and amiable in themselves, or loved and approved by him.

3dly. *The Law of God is, and must of necessity be, a rule of action for an immense multitude of beings*, that is, *for the whole intelligent Universe, throughout eternity.* The wise and perfect regulation of this vast kingdom cannot but require a course of administration, in many respects different from that, by which a little part of this kingdom might, perhaps, be effectually governed. Regulations, also, which are to extend their influence through eternity, must of course differ from those, whose influence is confined to a little period of time. Particularly,

4thly. *The Motives to obedience must be great, uniform, always*

*present, and always operative.* We well know by familiar experience, that a little State can be kept in order by what is commonly called a very gentle administration: that is, the government may consist of mild laws, holding out motives to obedience of moderate efficacy, and an administration of those laws, presenting by its gentleness similar motives. Whereas a great empire, containing vast multitudes of people, can be successfully controlled, only by what is called a more vigorous or energetic government; inducing obedience by more powerful motives, addressed unceasingly to every subject, both in the laws and in the administration. The degree, to which these motives need to be extended in the government of the universe, can be comprehended only by an unlimited understanding.

5thly. *All motives to obedience are comprised in natural good and natural evil;* that is, *in enjoyment and suffering.* As a moral government influences only by motives, and only in this way preserves the peace, and insures the happiness, of those who obey; it is plain, that these motives, found in enjoyment and suffering, must in such a kingdom as this, possess, if its peace and happiness are to be secured, very great power; power, sufficient to accomplish the end. How great the suffering, or the enjoyment, proposed by the law, and produced by the administration, as motives to obedience and disobedience, must be, God only can determine.

6thly. *A great part of all the motives to obedience, in such a Government, is presented by the uniformity, and exactness, of the administration.* No State, in the present world, is ever well governed; is ever orderly, peaceful, and happy; under an administration inconsistent with itself; an administration at one time rigid, at another lax; at one time severe, at another indulgent. This is proverbially acknowledged. Such a government of the Universe would, not improbably within a little time, throw its affairs into confusion, and involve its inhabitants in very extensive evil, if not in absolute ruin. If the law of God, then, were not to be executed, unless occasionally; if its penalties were not inflicted on penitents; this inconsistency would be seen in all its extent, and be productive of all its evil consequences. But this could not be honourable to God; nor, as it would seem, useful to his Intelligent kingdom.

7thly. *The law of God is formed in such a manner, as to insure, if obeyed, the supreme glory of his character, and the highest happiness of his subjects.* Nothing can be so honourable to God, as to sit at the head of an immense and an eternal kingdom, composed of subjects, who *love him with all the heart, and each other as themselves;* a kingdom, therefore, of perfect order, harmony, and rectitude. But these immense blessings are secured, as well as generated, by this law. A law of such importance can neither be given up, nor changed in any manner, consistently with the honour of God.

8thly. *The advent of Christ is every where exhibited, as fraught with peculiar blessings to mankind.* It was published by the Angel to the *Bethlehem* shepherds, as an event, the news of which were *good tidings of great joy.* It was sung by his heavenly companions, as the foundation, and source, *of glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men.* But if Christ did not make an atonement for sin, it will be difficult; I presume it will be impossible; to point out, or to conceive, in what respect his advent was of such importance, either to the glory of God, or to the good of mankind. On this ground, he certainly was *not the means of pardon* to men; because they are pardoned without his interference. He was not the means, even of *publishing this pardon;* for it had been published long before, and amply, by the Prophets of the Old Testament. *A broken heart*, and *a contrite spirit*, says *David, thou wilt not despise. Let the wicked forsake his way*, says *Isaiah, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn to the Lord, for he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

If Christ made an Atonement for the sins of mankind; all the magnificent expressions concerning his mission, and character; the declarations, that he is the only Saviour of mankind; and that *there is Salvation in no other;* are easily understood; if not, I am unable to see how they can be explained. Particularly, I am unable to discern how God is so solemnly said to be peculiarly glorified by the mission of Christ: for, according to this scheme, he was sent for no purpose, which had not been accomplished before; and which might not, for aught that appears, have been accomplished afterwards, without his appearance in the world.

# SERMON LVI.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS ATONEMENT.—ITS EXISTENCE.—THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS PERFORMED.—ITS EXTENT.

ROMANS iii. 24—26. *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

IN the last sermon, I proposed to discourse on *the Atonement of Christ*, under the following heads:

I. *The Nature;*

II. *The Necessity;* and,

III. *The Existence; of an atonement for sin:*

IV. *The Manner, in which it was performed:* and,

V. *Its Extent.*

*The two first* of these I considered sufficiently in that discourse. The three last I propose to examine at the present time; and shall proceed without any preliminary remarks to show,

III. *The Existence of an Atonement for sin.*

It is hardly necessary to observe here, that, as all our knowledge of this subject is revealed, all proofs of the fact in question must be derived from Revelation. The proofs, which I shall allege, I shall arrange under the following heads:

1st. *Those passages of Scripture, which speak of Christ as a Propitiation for sin.*

These are the Text, 1 *John* ii. 2, and 1 *John* iv. 10. Of these, the Text first claims our consideration. In the text it is declared, that God has set forth Christ *to be a propitiation.* The word, here rendered *propitiation*, is ιλαστηριον. This word is used only twice in the Greek Testament; viz. in the text, and *Hebrews* ix. 5. Its proper meaning is *the propitiatory*, or *mercy-seat;* as it is rendered in the latter passage. The mercy-seat, in the tabernacle or temple, was the place where God manifested himself, peculiarly, by the *Shechinah*, or visible symbol of his presence; heard the prayers and accepted the offerings, of his people; and dispensed to them his mercy, in answer to their supplications. The mercy-seat, we are taught in the text, was a type, of which Christ, the true ιλαστηριον, was the antitype. In *him* God hears our prayers, and dispenses his own mercy to us. The mercy-seat, the place where God exhibited himself as thus propitious to mankind, was itself a mere

shadow, or symbol, denoting Christ; the means by which he is rendered propitious. Although the word differs, therefore, from that used in the other passages mentioned, the meaning is the same. It is accordingly rendered in the same manner by the translators.

A propitiation for sin is the means, by which God is rendered merciful to sinners. Christ is here declared to be this propitiation. But the only possible sense, in which Christ can have become the means of rendering God merciful to sinners, is by making an atonement for them. This Atonement I have explained to consist in making sufficient amends for the faults, which they have committed, and placing the law, and government, of God in such a situation, that when sinners are pardoned *both shall* be equally honourable, and efficacious, as before. The motives to obedience, also, must in no degree be lessened. Further; the character of God, when pardoning sinners, must appear perfectly consistent with itself and exactly expressed by the law. Finally; God must be seen to be no less opposed to sin, and no less delighted with holiness, than when the law was formed.

This doctrine is completely established by the text. God is here said to have set forth Christ *to declare his righteousness*, or, as it is better rendered by *Macknight*, *for a proof of his own righteousness in passing by the sins, which were before committed, through the forbearance of God; for a proof, also, of his righteousness, at the present time, in order that he may be just, when justifying him, who believeth in Jesus.* In this passage, the end, for which Christ was set forth to be a propitiation, is asserted to be, *that Christ might declare, or be a proof of, the righteousness of God, in passing by*, or *remitting, sins which were past; and of his righteousness, also, at the present time, when justifying believers.* In these assertions we are taught in the most unambiguous manner, that, unless Christ had been set forth as a propitiation, the righteousness of God, in remitting past and present sins, would not have been manifested. It is also declared in the same decisive manner, that, if Christ had not been set forth as a propitiation, God would not have been just, when justifying believers. Christ, therefore, in the character of a propitiation, and only in this character, has made the pardoning, or justification, of sinners consistent with the justice of God. To pardon sinners, therefore, without a propitiation, would have been inconsistent with divine justice, and of course, impossible.

The same doctrine is further confirmed by St. *John*, who in his first Epistle ii. 2, and iv. 10, declares that Christ *is a propitiation for our sins.* The word, used in both these passages, is ιλασμος; the proper English of which is *a propitiation*, a propitiatory sacrifice, or sin-offering. This word is often used by the LXX.; and appropriately signifies, in their use of it, *a sacrifice of atonement.*

Thus *Κριος ἱλασμου is a *Ram for a sin-offering*, and †προσφερειν ἱλασμον, is *to offer a sin-offering*. The same signification it has, and can only have, as used by St. *John*.

2dly. *Those passages of Scripture, which speak of Christ as a Ransom for mankind.*

These are *Matthew* xx. 28; the corresponding passage in *Mark* x. 45; and 1st of *Timothy* ii. 6. The passage in *Matthew* is, *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* That in *Mark* is a repetition of this. That in *Timothy* is, *Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* The word, translated *ransom* in the two first of these passages, is λυτρον; which signifies *the price, paid for the deliverance of a captive from the slavery, or death, to which, among the ancients, a captive was, or might be, regularly condemned.* The word, in *Timothy*, is αντιλυτρον; which, according to *Estius*, denoted *the ransom, paid for the life of a captive, by giving up the life of another person.* The λυτρον might be *a sum of money.* But the signification in all these passages is unquestionably the same in substance; because exactly the same thing is referred to in them all. This, in the passage from Timothy, is declared to be *giving up his own life for the life of sinners;* or in other words, *dying, that sinners might live.* I know not how the fact, that Christ made an atonement, could have been declared in more explicit, or more forcible, language.

Of the same nature are all those passages, which declare, *that we are* REDEEMED *by Christ.* The Greek word, which signifies to redeem, is λυτροω; as that which signifies redemption is απολυτρωσις: both derivatives from λυτρον, *ransom.* Every one, who has read his Bible, knows, that Christ is there appropriately styled *our Redeemer;* and that we are often said to be *redeemed*, and to *have redemption*, by him. For example, Ephesians i. 7, *In whom we have redemption through his blood.* Rev. v. 9, *Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.* Gal. iii. 13, *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* In all these, and various other passages of the New Testament, it is declared, that *Christ redeemed us:* that is, *he brought us out from the bondage and condemnation of sin by his blood, and by being made a curse for us, in that he died upon the accursed tree.* It will be unnecessary to multiply words, to show that exactly the same thing is here taught, as in those passages, where Christ is declared to have *given himself as a ransom.*

3dly. *Those passages, in which Christ is spoken of as a Substitute for mankind.*

These are very numerous, and of many forms. A few of them, only, can be recited at the present time. *Surely*, says Isaiah, *he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. But he was wound-*

* Lev. vi. 6, 7. Numb. v. 8. † Ezek. xliv. 27. Parkhurst. Macknight.

*ed for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all; for the transgression of my People was he stricken. By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin; For he shall bear their iniquities. And he bare the sin of many.** These passages can need no explanation. Language cannot more clearly, or more strongly, assert, that Christ was a substitute for sinners; that he bore their sins, and suffered for their iniquities; or, in other words, that he became an Atonement for them.

*Daniel*, in his 9th chapter, recites, from the mouth of *Gabriel*, the following words: *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people;—to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness —and to anoint the most Holy.* In the following verse, he further informs us, that, at the end of the *seventy weeks*, the Messiah *should be cut off, but not for himself.* Accordingly, at the end of seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, *from the going forth of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem*, published by *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, the Messiah *was cut off, but not for himself;* that is, within four years, after he had been anointed by the Holy Ghost, according to the same prediction. The effect of his being cut off was to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity.

1 Cor. xv. 3, *Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.* Here it is not only asserted, that *Christ died for our sins;* but this fact is said to have taken place, *according to the general tenour of the Scriptures.* The same doctrine is taught by Christ himself, first to *Cleophas* and his companion, and next to the eleven; Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 45, 46. Then he said unto them, *O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to have entered into his glory? Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written; and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead, the third day.* In both these passages our Saviour asserts his death to have been *due*, or *necessary;* because it had been before declared by the prophets, and in the Scriptures; reproves the two disciples for not thus understanding, and believing, the prophets; and teaches *them*, that this is the substance of all, which the prophets had spoken; and *the eleven*, that to understand this great fact, in a proper manner, is to understand the Scriptures themselves at large.

*Gal.* i. 4, *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this evil world. Hebrews* i. 3, *When he had by himself purged our sins.* 1 *Peter* ii. 24, *Who his own self bare our sins in*

* Isaiah liii.

*his own body on the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.* 1 *John* iii. 5, *He was manifested, to take away our sins.* *Rev.* i. 5, *Unto him, that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God.*

In every one of these passages, as well as many others, it is evident beyond all debate, that Christ stood in the place of mankind; bore their sins; and healed them by the stripes, which he suffered: that our iniquities were laid on him; that he washed our sins away; became a curse for us; was wounded for our transgressions; made reconciliation for iniquity; and was cut off, not for himself, but for mankind. The same doctrine is taught with equal precision in many other forms of expression; but, I presume, it is unnecessary to add any thing further on this part of the subject.

4thly. *I argue the same doctrine from those passages, in which we are said to be forgiven, or saved, for his sake, or in his name.*

*Acts* iv. 12, *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* *Acts* xiii. 38, *Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.* 1 *John* ii. 12, *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.* 1 *Cor.* vi. 11, *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Eph. iv. 32, *Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Now, it is plain, that we cannot be forgiven, washed, justified, or saved, *for the sake of Christ*, unless Christ was, in some sense or other, a *substitute for us; stood in our place; did something, which we had failed to do; made amends for faults, which we had committed;* or in other words, *made that atonement for sin, which God was pleased to accept.* Of the very same import are those passages of the Old Testament, in which sin is said to be forgiven, and blessings to be bestowed, upon mankind by God, *for his name's sake*, or *for his own sake.* In *Exod.* xxiii. 21, God, speaking of his own Angel, says, *beware of him, and obey his voice;* and *provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.* The *Jews*, of ancient times, considered *the name of God*, mentioned in a great number of passages in the Old Testament, as being no other, than one appellation of the Messiah; and construed those passages, in which the forgiveness of sin was promised for the sake of the Name of God, in some, and probably in all instances, as intending, and really, though figuratively, expressing, *forgiveness for the sake of the Messiah.* Thus, when in *Isaiah* xlviii. 9, God says, *For my name's sake will I defer mine anger;* and in the 11th verse, *For mine own sake will I do it;* when the *Psalmist* says, Ps. xxv. 11, *For thy Name's sake pardon mine iniquity;* and Ps. cix. 21, *Do thou for me, O God, the Lord, for thy Name's sake;* and Ps. cxliii. 11, *Quicken me for thy name's*

*sake;* and when the Church says, Ps. lxxix. 9, *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy Name's sake:* the phraseology is exactly equivalent to what it would be, if *for the sake of Christ* had been substituted in each of these cases. This, however, is not mentioned as being necessary to the proof of the doctrine in hand; but as evidence, that the same views of it are given us in both Testaments.

On the same ground we are required to *offer up our prayers to God in the Name of Christ.* In *John* xvi. 23, our Saviour says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive; that your joy may be full;* and again, *At that day ye shall ask in my name:* and in *John* xiv. 13, 14, *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* See, also, John xv. 16. St. *Paul* also, (Colossians iii. 17) *And whatsoever ye do in word, or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* The direction, given to us to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings in the name of Christ, and the promise, that in this case, and in this only, we shall be heard, teaches us in the strongest manner, that *our prayers are acceptable to God for his sake, and not our own;* and that in offering them we are to rely, wholly, for acceptance, and for blessings of every kind, on what he has done, and not on what we have ourselves done. Of course, the audience and acceptance which are granted, and the blessings which are given to us, are granted, and given, for the sake of Christ, and not for our own sakes. But no reason can be alleged, why blessings should be given to us for the sake of Christ, unless he has interfered in some manner, or other, in our behalf, and done something for us, which has made it pleasing, and proper, in the sight of God, to give us blessings on this account, which, otherwise, he would not have thought it proper to give. If God will not give us blessings on our own account, it is undoubtedly, because we have done something, which renders it improper for him thus to give them. Otherwise, the same benevolence, which feeds *the sparrow* and the *raven*, would certainly be ready to bless *us.* We, therefore, by our sins have forfeited our title to all blessings, and even to the privilege of asking for them. If God will give us blessings on account of Christ, it is certain, that Christ has done something for us, which has removed this impropriety, and which God accepts on our behalf, notwithstanding the forfeiture. In other words, he has made it consistent with the honour of the divine character and government, that the benevolence, which we had forfeited, should be renewedly exercised towards us.

5thly. *I argue the same doctrine from the Sacrifices, under the law of Moses.*

St. *Paul* tells us, that the ancient *tabernacle was a* FIGURE *for the time present.* In the service, performed in it, victims were continually offered, under the name of *sin-offerings;* and by them an atonement was made for the sins, and for the souls, of the people. On this subject, the passages, which declare the doctrine, here specified, are found almost every where in *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, and *Numbers;* and cannot need to be repeated, at this time. But we know, from the same Apostle, that *it is not possible for the blood of bulls, and of goats, to take away sin.* Yet *this blood* is said, in thirty or forty passages, to be *the means of making an atonement for those who offered it.* In what manner was this true? St. *Paul* himself has taught us that it was true, in the typical, or figurative, sense, only. All these sacrifices, as he has taught us expressly in the 9th and 10th chapters of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, were only types of the sacrifice of Christ; and the atonement, *professedly* made by them, was only a type of the *real* atonement, made by him. Particularly, the ceremonial of the sacrifice, on the great day of expiation, when the high priest made an atonement for himself, his family, the priests, and the whole congregation of Israel, was a remarkable and most lively type of the death and resurrection of Christ. On this day, the 10th day of the 7th month, annually, two goats were selected for an offering to God. One of these was killed, and his blood sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat, and upon the horns of the altar. This was called making an atonement for the holy place, and reconciling the holy place, the tabernacle, and the altar unto God; as having been polluted, during the preceding year, by the imperfect and impure services of sinful beings. On the head of the living goat *the high priest laid both his hands, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel; and sent him away by a fit man into the wilderness.* Of this goat it was said, that *he should bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.* This religious service cannot, I think, need any explanation.

I shall now proceed to consider,

IV. *The Manner in which the atonement was performed.*

On this subject, I observe,

1st. *That, in my own view, all the sufferings of Christ were included in the atonement, which he made for sin.*

Christ was perfectly holy. No part of his sufferings, therefore, can have been inflicted, or undergone, for his own sake. He was always *beloved* of God; and whatever he thought, spoke, or did, was ever *well-pleasing* in his sight. When, therefore, we are told, that *it pleased Jehovah to bruise him*, it was not as a punishment; for he never merited punishment; not a wanton, causeless infliction; for God cannot be the author of such an infliction. It was only as a substitute for mankind, that he was afflicted in any case, or in any degree; or because he had *laid on him the iniquities of us*

*all.* I understand all such general expressions as these: *Ought not Christ to have suffered; it behoved Christ to suffer; Christ must needs have suffered; Christ suffered for us; Who being rich, became poor, that ye through him might become rich;* as directly indicating, that all his sufferings were parts of his atonement.

2dly. *The death of Christ, together with its preceding and attendant agonies, especially constituted his atonement.*

This must, I think, have been already made evident from many passages, quoted, under the third head of discourse, as proofs of the Existence of an atonement for sin. I shall, however, add to these, several others, which must, it would seem, place the point, now in question, beyond a doubt.

In the text it is said, that *Christ is set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood.* But if the blood of Christ was not the means of his becoming a propitiation, it is difficult to conceive in what sense *his* blood can be the object of our faith, any more than the blood of *Jeremiah, Peter, Paul,* or any other Martyr to the truth of God. *But if we walk in the light,* says St. *John—the blood of his Son Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Ephesians* i. 7, *In whom we have redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of sins; according to the riches of his grace. Ephesians* ii. 13, *But now in Christ Jesus ye, who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* 1 *Peter* i. 18, 19, *Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. Rev.* i. 5, *Who washed us from our sins in his blood. Rev.* v. 9, *Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. Rom.* v. 9, *Being justified by his blood.* In these passages it is directly asserted, that mankind are *washed, cleansed, justified, forgiven, redeemed, and made nigh unto God, by the blood of Christ.* He, who admits the Existence of an Atonement, cannot, with these declarations in view, hesitate to admit also, that it was accomplished by his blood, that is, by his death and its connected sufferings. The views of Christ himself concerning this subject cannot easily be mistaken, if we remember, that he said, that *he came to give his life a ransom for many; that the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep; I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give, is my flesh; which I will give for the life of the world. John* vi. 51.

3dly. *The peculiar agonies, which preceded, and attended, the death of Christ, and in which the atonement, made by him for sin, peculiarly consisted, were chiefly distresses of mind, and not of body.* This I think evident from many considerations.

1st. *There is no reason, so far as I can see, to suppose that the bodily sufferings of Christ were more severe, or even so severe, as those which have been experienced by many others.*

The death of the cross, was undoubtedly a very distressing death. But it was probably less distressing, than that, experienced by

many of the Martyrs. Some of these were roasted by a slow fire. Some were dislocated on the rack, and suffered to expire under long continued tortures. Some had their flesh taken off, piece by piece, in a very gradual manner, with red hot pincers. Others expired under various other kinds of exquisite sufferings, devised by the utmost ingenuity of man, and protracted with the utmost cruelty. Multitudes of these Martyrs, however, have sustained all their distresses without a complaint, and expired without a groan.

Multitudes also, both of Martyrs and others, have died on the cross itself; and, for aught that appears, with bodily anguish, not inferior to that, which Christ endured. Yet of these, it would seem, numbers have died in the same peaceful manner. Even the thieves, who were crucified together with our Saviour, seem to have died without any complaint.

Yet Christ uttered a very bitter complaint on the cross; and complained, also, in a similar manner, in the garden of *Gethsemane*. Whence arose these complaints? Not from his want of resignation to the will of God; for no other person was ever so resigned: not from the want of fortitude; for no other person ever possessed it in an equal degree. The very complaints, which he utters, do not appear to have any respect to his bodily sufferings, but to have originated entirely from a different cause; and that cause purely mental; as I shall have occasion further onward to explain.

2dly. *Christ is expressly said to have made his Soul an offering for sin.*

Isaiah liii. 19, *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.* In the margin, "*When his soul shall make an offering for sin.*" In *Lowth*, "*If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice.*" But if his soul was indeed the sin-offering, then the sufferings which he underwent as an atonement for sin, were peculiarly the sufferings of his soul; or mental sufferings. Accordingly, they are called *the travail of his soul.**

3dly. *The complaints of Christ in the* 22d, 40th, 69th, and 80th *Psalms, appear to indicate, that his sufferings were chiefly sufferings of mind.*

Such, at least, is the impression, made on my mind by reading these passages of Scripture; an impression, resulting, not so much from detached parts, as from the whole strain, of the composition. To this mode of examining the subject I shall refer those, who hear me, for their own satisfaction.

4thly. *The agony, which Christ underwent in the garden of Gethsemane, exhibits the same truth.*

Christ, in this garden, had his sufferings in full view. The prospect was so terrible, that it forced from him *sweat, as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.* At the same time, he prayed earnestly thrice, that, *if it were possible, this cup might pass from*

* He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Ibid.

*him.* It cannot, I think, be imagined, even with decency, and certainly not in any consistency with the character of Christ, as manifested elsewhere, that the mere prospect of death, even of a most cruel and bitter death, was so overwhelming to his mind, as to convulse his constitution in this manner, or to force from him such a prayer. Perhaps no person, under the mere apprehension of death, was ever agitated in an equal degree. Had it not *pleased Jehovah to bruise him*, there is no reason to believe that he would have been anxiously solicitous concerning the utmost evils, which he could suffer from the hands of men. He had directed even his disciples, notwithstanding their frailty, *not to fear them, who could kill the body, and after that could do no more.* It cannot be supposed, that his own conduct was not exactly conformed to this precept.

5thly. *Christ himself appears to have decided this point, in the manner already specified.*

In his exclamation on the cross, he said, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* As this was his only complaint, it must, I think, be believed to refer to his principal suffering. But the evil, here complained of, *is being forsaken by God.* In the language of the Psalmist, *God hid his face from him;* that is, if I mistake not, *withdrew from him, wholly, those manifestations of supreme complacency in his character and conduct, which he had always before made.* As this was in itself a most distressing testimony of the divine anger against sin; so it is naturally imagined, and, I think, when we are informed that *it pleased Jehovah to bruise him*, directly declared, in the Scriptures, that this manifestation was accompanied by other disclosures of the anger of God against sin, and against him, as the Substitute for sinners.

The views, and feelings, of one mind towards another can produce the highest sense of suffering, of which we are capable. The esteem, and love, of Intelligent beings are, when united, the most exquisite of all enjoyment; and are naturally, and in all probability necessarily, coveted more than any other, except the approbation of our own minds. Their mere indifference towards us, when they have opportunity of being so far acquainted with us, as to give room for being esteemed and loved by them, is, ordinarily, the source of severe mortification. In proportion as they are more intelligent and worthy, their love and esteem are more important to us, and more coveted by us; and the refusal of it creates in us more intense distress.

The complacency of God, whose mind is infinite, and whose disposition is perfect, is undoubtedly the first of all possible enjoyments. The loss of it, therefore, and the consequent suffering of his hatred and contempt, are undoubtedly the greatest evils, which a created mind can suffer; evils, which will, in all probability, constitute the primary anguish, experienced in the world of wo. Omniscience and Omnipotence are certainly able to communicate, during even a short time, to a finite mind, such views of the hatred

and contempt of God towards sin and sinners, and of course towards a Substitute for sinners, as would not only fill its capacity of suffering, but probably put an end to its existence. In this manner, I apprehend, the chief distresses of Christ were produced. In this manner, principally, was that testimony of God against disobedience, exhibited to the Redeemer, and ultimately to the Universe, which so solemnly supported the sanctions of the divine law, and so illustriously honoured the divine government, as to prevent the pardon of sinners from being regarded by Intelligent creatures, as the mere indulgence of a weak and changeable disposition in the infinite Ruler.

6thly. *The active obedience of Christ was, in my apprehension, essentially concerned in his Atonement.*

This position I shall illustrate under the following particulars.

1st. *If Christ had not obeyed the Law perfectly, he could not have atoned for the sins of mankind at all.*

It was as *a lamb without blemish, and without spot*, that he became a proper, acceptable offering; and in this character only. Had he been stained with iniquity, his sufferings would have been, and would have been regarded, as the mere punishment of his own sins; and not as an expiation for the sins of others. Had he been of a neutral character, his sufferings would have been of no apparent value. On the contrary, they would have been considered as strange, inexplicable, and resembling those accidents, which being unconnected with any thing preceding or succeeding, are fitted only to excite a momentary attention, and wonder. *The excellency of Christ gave all the real value, and efficacy, to his sufferings.* But can it be said, that that, which gave all the real value to his sufferings, constituted no part of the atonement, which he made by them? The atonement of Christ certainly did not consist in mere suffering; but in such sufferings of such a person. But Christ could not have been such a person without his active obedience; nor could his sufferings have been of such a nature, if he had not been such a person. If he had not suffered, he could not have atoned for sin at all. If he had not obeyed, his sufferings would have been of no value.

2dly. *It was indispensable to the existence of the atonement of Christ, that he should magnify the Law and make it honourable.*

This I consider as having been done by his obedience in the first instance, and in the second by his sufferings. The former was as truly indispensable, as the latter; and was indispensable to the existence of the latter. In the predictions of the Old Testament, and the declarations of the New, similar stress is laid on both these great articles. I have expressed my views of this subject in a late discourse; I will not repeat them here; but will only add, that the obedience of Christ as truly honoured the preceptive part of the law, as his sufferings, the penal. The doctrine, which has been taught by some wise and good men, that, if *the Law* is not discerned

by itself to be *holy, just, and good*, the obedience of Christ cannot make it appear so; but only show, that it was a law, which he was so desirous to support as to be willing to obey it; is, I am bound to say, contrary to my own conviction. *The character of Christ, as excellent*, is certainly capable of being seen, and realized, independently of the divine law. Christ, as all those with whom I am now contending, will acknowledge, is a Divine person. Surely we are not obliged to have recourse to the law of God, as the only means of proving the excellency of his character. Independently of this, we are able to prove, that the infinite Mind is possessed of infinite excellence; and of course cannot but discern, that a law, which this excellence is disposed to obey, as well as to promulgate, must be of the most glorious kind possible. The mere promulgation of the law consists in *declarations* only. But who does not know, that *actions* carry with them an evidence, far more convincing, and especially far more impressive, than any declarations whatever? At the same time, the transcendent *dignity* of the Son of God lends the same lustre to his obedience, as to his sufferings; and renders the *former* of the same influence in recommending the *precepts* of the law, which the latter possess in vindicating its *penalty*. Besides, the same objection may be made against the proof, derived from the sufferings of Christ, that the penalty of the law is just. For it may with the same propriety be alleged, that if the penalty of the law does not appear just in itself, the sufferings of Christ can never make it appear so: since they prove no more, than that Christ was so desirous to support the law, as to be willing, for this end, to undergo such sufferings. Should it be said, that the sufferings of Christ involved *self-denial;* and that thus they exhibited the sincerity of his regard for the law, because self-denial is the strongest proof of sincerity: I answer, that his consent to become a subject, and all the parts of his obedience involved self-denial also; less, apparently at least, in degree; but the same in kind. Should it be said, that the sufferings of Christ *were a testimony of God's displeasure against sin, and of the righteousness of the penalty denounced against it:* I answer; So is his obedience equally *a testimony of God's complacency in the precepts of the Law, and the righteousness of requiring his intelligent creatures to obey them.* Should it be said that his sufferings *were inflictions from the hand of God:* I answer, that his obedience was required by God, and was, therefore, equally a testimony of his pleasure. Finally; should it be said, that Christ's obedience *was voluntary;* I answer, that his sufferings were equally voluntary: otherwise, they would never have existed; or, if we suppose them to have existed, would have had no efficacy.

Upon the whole, the attempts made to discriminate between these parts of Christ's mediation, and to assign to each its exact proportion of influence in the economy of redemption, seem to me to have been very partially successful.

V. *I shall now, in a few words, consider the extent of Christ's Atonement.*

On this subject I observe,

1st. *The Atonement of Christ was complete.*

By this I mean, that it was such, as to vindicate the law, government, and character, of God. This we know, because Christ repeatedly declared, that his work was finished; because it was appointed, and accepted, of God; as we are assured by the many testimonies of his approbation, given to Christ; and because the SPIRIT OF GRACE descended in a glorious manner, on the day of Pentecost, to carry the design of it into execution.

2dly. *The degree of suffering, which Christ underwent in making this atonement, was far inferior to that, which will be experienced by an individual sufferer beyond the grave.*

It will not be supposed, as plainly it cannot, that Christ suffered in his divine nature. Nor will it be believed, that any created nature could, in that short space of time, suffer what would be equivalent to even a slight distress, extended through eternity.

3dly. *The Atonement of Christ was still of infinite value.*

The Atonement of Christ, great as his distresses were, did not derive its value principally from the degree in which he experienced them; but from the infinite greatness and excellency of his character. Although the Divine nature is necessarily unsuffering; yet, in this case, it exactly coincided in its dictates with all the conduct of the created mind of Christ; and lent to that conduct its own infinite weight and worth.

4thly. *The atonement of Christ was sufficient in its extent to open the door for the pardon of all human sinners.*

This doctrine is so often and so plainly declared in the Scriptures, that I am surprised to find a doubt concerning it, entertained by any man. *Who gave himself*, says St. *Paul*, *a ransom for all, to be testified in due time:* and again, *Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe. He is the propitiation for our sins;* says St. *John*, *and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* It is needless any farther to multiply passages to this effect.

When this discourse was first written, disputes concerning the Extent of the Atonement had not openly appeared in this country; and I did not suppose it to be necessary to canvass the question with any particularity. The length of the present discourse forbids me to dwell upon the subject now. Yet I will very briefly suggest two or three arguments for the consideration of my audience.

1st. If the Atonement of Christ consisted in making such amends for the disobedience of man as should place the law, government, and character of God in such a light, that he could forgive sinners, of the human race, without any inconsistency; then these Amends, or this Atonement, were all absolutely necessary, in order to render such forgiveness proper, or consistent with the law and charac-

ter of God, in a single instance. The forgiveness of one sinner, without these Amends, would be just as much a contradiction to the declarations of the law, as the forgiveness of a million. If, then, the Amends, actually made, were such, that God could consistently forgive one sinner; he might with equal consistency, and propriety, forgive any number, unless prevented by some other reason. The Atonement, in other words, which was necessary for a world, was equally necessary, and in just the same manner, and degree, for an individual sinner.

2dly. The Atonement was by the infinite dignity and excellence of the Redeemer rendered infinitely meritorious. But it cannot be denied, that an infinitely meritorious atonement is sufficient for all the apostate children of Adam.

3dly. If the Atonement of Christ consisted in suffering what those, for whose sins he atoned, deserve to suffer; his mediation did not lessen the evils of the apostacy. All the difference, which it made in the state of things, was, that he suffered in the stead of those whom he came to redeem; and suffered the same miseries, which they were condemned to suffer. In other words, an innocent being suffered the very misery, which the guilty should have suffered. Of course there is in the divine Kingdom just as much misery, *with* the mediation of Christ, as there would have been *without* it; and nothing is gained by this wonderful work, but the transfer of this misery from the guilty to the innocent.

4thly. If Christ has not made a sufficient Atonement for others beside the Elect; then his Salvation is not offered to them at all; and they are not guilty for not receiving it. But this is contrary to the whole tenour of the Gospel; which every where exhibits sinners as greatly guilty for rejecting Christ. Yet if Christ be not offered to them; they cannot be guilty of rejecting him.

5thly. The Gospel, or glad tidings published by Christ, is said to be good tidings unto all people. But, if there be no Atonement made for the sins of all people; the Gospel, instead of being good news to them, is not addressed to them all.

6thly. Ministers are required to preach Faith, as well as Repentance, to all sinners as their duty. But if no Atonement has been made for their sins, they cannot believe: for to them Christ is in no sense a Saviour; and therefore, not even a possible object of their faith.

Should it be asked, why then, are not all men pardoned? I answer; because all mankind do not evangelically believe in this Atonement, and its Author. No man is pardoned merely because of the Atonement made by Christ; but because of his own acceptance, also, of that atonement, by faith. The way is open, and equally open, to all; although all may not be equally inclined to walk in it.

The proffers of pardon on the very same conditions are made, with equal sincerity and kindness, to every man. He who does not accept them, therefore, ought to remember, that nothing stands in his way, but his own impenitence and unbelief.

# SERMON LVII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS ATONEMENT.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.—APPLICATION.

ROMANS iii. 24—26. *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

HAVING finished the observations, which I intended, concerning the atonement of Christ, as *proofs of its existence, and explanations of its nature;* I shall now proceed to consider *some Objections to this doctrine;* and to suggest *several practical Remarks*, to which it naturally gives birth.

Among the Objections, alleged, against this doctrine, I select the following, as particularly deserving attention.

1st. It is objected, *that a Vicarious Atonement for sin is not consistent with the dictates of reason.*

"The sin, it is observed, is ours; and cannot belong to another. Whatever atonement is to be made ought, therefore, to be made by *us:* particularly such an atonement, as is here insisted on; viz. such an one, as is to be made by suffering. The sufferings, which are necessary to expiate our guilt, are due from the sinner only; and cannot be justly inflicted on any other person."

I cheerfully agree with the objector, that the sinner cannot claim such an interference on his behalf, as is made by the atonement of Christ. Strict justice demands the punishment of the sinner only; and can, in no wise, require the punishment of another in his stead. But I still deny the consequence, which the objector derives from these premises.

No person, who has observed the affairs of the present world with attention, can hesitate to admit, that vicarious interference, to a great extent, producing in great numbers both good and evil consequences, is a prominent feature of the providential system, by which the affairs of this world are regulated. Children thus become rich, well educated, intelligent, religious, and everlastingly happy, by the agency of their parents: while other children owe, in a great measure, to the same agency the contrary evils of poverty, ignorance, vice, and final ruin. Friends by their interference become the means of wealth, reputation, advancement, holiness, and everlasting life, to their friends; and rescue them from pover-

ty, bondage, disgrace, profligacy, and perdition. Enemies accomplish all the contrary evils for their enemies; and by temptation, slander, fraud, and treachery, effectuate for those, whom they hate, every kind of destruction. A great part of the business of human life, both public and private, is in the strict sense vicarious: the benefits, or the injuries, rarely terminating in the personal good of the agent only, but almost of course extending to others. The agency of *Washington* has beneficially affected every inhabitant of the United States. That of *Moses* extended blessings to the *Israelitish* nation through fifteen hundred years. That of St. *Paul* and his companions has spread holiness through the Christian world for seventeen centuries; and added many millions to the general assembly of the first-born. Nay, this very agency will hereafter become the means of converting the whole human race to Christianity; people heaven with *a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues;* and diffuse *glory, honour,* and immortal life, throughout never ending ages.

From these observations it is evident, that vicarious agency is so far from being an unreasonable thing in itself, as in one form and another to constitute an important part of the present system of things, and to have a very extensive, and very efficacious, influence on the most interesting concerns of mankind. The whole analogy of human affairs in the present world furnish us, therefore, with every reason to expect, that vicarious agency would be adopted, more or less, in every part of the providential system.

What the state of the world thus naturally teaches us to look for, Revelation countenances in the strongest manner. A single instance will be sufficient to place this truth in the clearest light. Every one, who is at all acquainted with the Scriptures, perfectly well knows, that they require of all men intercession for their fellow-men; and that to this intercession blessings are both promised, and declared to be given. *Is any sick among you?* says St. James, *let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him—and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and, if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.* If restoration from disease, and the forgiveness of sins; blessings of the greatest temporal and spiritual magnitude; are promised, and given, in consequence of the intercession of others; our minds can set no limits to the propriety, or the efficacy, of vicarious interference, exhibited in other forms.

In the present case, (the case objected to) the propriety of admitting vicarious interference is complete. Mankind were all sinners; were all condemned by the unalterable law of God; and were all, therefore, destined to final ruin. In themselves there was no power to expiate their sins, or to prevent their destruction. When it is remembered, that their number was incalculable, and that each of them was immortal, the case must be admitted to have been great, and interesting, beyond any finite comprehension.

Both the magnitude of the case, therefore, and its desperate nature, demanded of a benevolent being every effort capable of being demanded. Whatever could with propriety be done was plainly, and loudly, called for by circumstances so deplorable; a wretchedness so vast; a doom extending to a collection of intelligent creatures so plainly incomprehensible. But vicarious efforts could here be made, and made with propriety, and success. The law and government, here dishonoured, could, and I hope it has been proved that they could, be supported in their full strength and efficacy; the sin could be expiated; the sinners restored to holiness, the favour of God, and immortal life; and the character of God appear, not only with the same, but increased, glory. Thus from the nature of the case, as well as from the analogy of things, a vicarious interference is so far from being in the present instance improbable, or improper, that it is strongly recommended to our belief by the very best presumptive evidence.

2dly. It is objected, *that the punishment of an innocent person, such as Christ was, is inconsistent with the plain dictates of justice.*

To punish an innocent person for a fault, not his own, will not be denied to be unjust. Nor will an inquiry now be instituted concerning the question, whether it would be consistent with justice to require, in any possible case, a being perfectly holy to suffer for the sake of other beings of a different character, in order to relieve them from greater sufferings. Neither of these will be necessary at the present time. The objection may be completely answered in another manner. For,

1st. *That Christ actually suffered, while yet he was perfectly holy, the objector cannot deny.* He, therefore, suffered for himself, or for mankind. If he suffered for mankind, the existence of an atonement is admitted. If he suffered for himself; then the objector must admit, that he was punished, while yet he was perfectly holy; and, of course, that God can inflict suffering, not only on holy beings, but for their own sake; or, in other words, can retribute punishment to obedience. I leave the Objector to choose which part of this alternative he pleases.

2dly. *Christ was not required to suffer.* This is taught in the Scriptures, in a great multitude of passages, and in many forms, too well known to be specified here. *Christ voluntarily assumed the office of a Redeemer;* voluntarily became a substitute for man; and of his own accord *gave his life as a ransom for many.* It is true, that in all this he obeyed the will of his Father; but it is not true, that he did not voluntarily enter upon every part of this course of obedience. *When he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he took upon himself the form of a servant; and laid down his own life, when none could take it out of his hand.* But it is evident, that there can be no injustice in requiring a being, perfectly holy, to fulfil his own engagements, and to do what he has covenanted to do; although

by this covenant he has engaged to yield himself to personal suffering. To consent to suffer may be on his part right, when by his suffering he can redeem others from greater suffering, or accomplish in any way what will, on the whole, be superior good. On the part of God also, it may, and, if nothing extraneous prevent, must, be right to accept of his sufferings in such a case, if voluntarily proffered. The objection, therefore, is destitute of weight.

3dly. It is further objected, *that, if Christ expiated the sins of mankind, God is obliged by justice to bestow on them Salvation.*

This objection is derived from misapprehensions concerning the nature of the atonement. The Scriptures in speaking on this subject very frequently, as well as very naturally, speak in figurative language. Particularly, they exhibit us as *bought with a price;* as purchased; as redeemed; that is, literally understood, as bought from a state of bondage and condemnation by the blood of Christ; as ransomed by the λυτρον, or *price of redemption.* This language, derived from that fact in human affairs, which, among the customary actions of men, approaches nearest in resemblance to the atonement of Christ, seems unwarily to have been considered as describing literally this atonement. But this mode of considering it is plainly erroneous. We are not, in the literal sense, *bought*, or *purchased*, at all. Nor has Christ, in the literal sense, paid any price, to purchase mankind from slavery and death.

The error, into which the objector has fallen, has, I acknowledge, been countenanced by many Christians, who have held the doctrine of the atonement. These have supposed the satisfaction for sin, made by the Redeemer, essentially to resemble the satisfaction, made for a debtor by paying the debt, which he owed. In this case, it is evident, that, if the creditor accept the payment from a third person, he is bound in justice to release the debtor. As the two cases have been supposed to be similar, it has been concluded, that, since Christ has made such a satisfaction for sinners, God is in justice also bound to release them.

This, however, is an unfounded and unscriptural view of the subject. There is no substantial resemblance between the payment of a debt for an insolvent debtor, and the satisfaction, rendered to distributive justice for a criminal. The debtor owes money; and this is all he owes. If, then, all the money, which he owes, is paid, and accepted; justice is completely satisfied, and the creditor can demand nothing more. To demand more, either from the debtor, or from any other person, would be plainly unjust. When, therefore, the debt is paid by a third person, the debtor is discharged by justice merely. But, when a criminal has failed of doing his duty, as a subject to lawful government, and violated laws, which he was bound to obey; he has committed a *fault*, for which he has merited punishment. In this case, justice, not in *the commutative*, but the *distributive, sense;* the only sense, in which it can be con-

cerned with this subject; demands, not the future obedience, nor an equivalent for the omitted obedience, but merely the punishment, of the offender. The only reparation for the wrong, which he has done, required by strict justice, is this punishment: a reparation necessarily and always required. There are cases, however, in which an atonement, such as was described in the first of these discourses, may be accepted: An atonement, by which the honour and efficacy of the government may be preserved, and yet the offender pardoned. In such a case, however, the personal character of the offender is unaltered. Before the atonement was made, he was a criminal. After the atonement is made, he is not less a criminal. As a criminal, he before merited punishment. As a criminal, he no less merits it now. The turpitude of his character remains the same; and, while it remains, he cannot fail to deserve exactly the same punishment. After the atonement is made, it cannot be truly said, therefore, any more than before, that he does not deserve punishment. But if the atonement be accepted, it may be truly said, that, consistently with the honour of the government, and the public good, he may be pardoned. This act of grace is all that he can hope for; and this he cannot *claim*, on account of any thing in himself, or any thing to which he is entitled, but only may *hope*, from the mere grace, or free-gift, of the ruler. Before the atonement was made, the ruler, however benevolently inclined, could not pardon him, consistently with his own character, the honour of his government, or the public good. After it is made, he can pardon him, in consistency with them all; and if the offender discover a penitent and becoming disposition, undoubtedly will, if he be a benevolent ruler.

From these observations it is manifest, that the atonement of Christ in no sense makes it necessary, that God should accept the sinner, on the ground of justice; but only renders his forgiveness not inconsistent with the divine character. Before the atonement, he could not have been forgiven: after the atonement, this impossibility ceases. The sinner can now be forgiven, notwithstanding the turpitude of his character, and the greatness of his offences. But forgiveness is an act of grace only; and to the same grace must the penitent be indebted for all the future blessings connected with forgiveness.

I have now considered all the objections against the doctrine of the atonement, which I consider as claiming an answer; and shall therefore proceed, as I proposed at the commencement of this discourse, to make some practical remarks, arising from the preceding observations on this important subject.

## REMARKS.

From these observations it is evident,

1st. *That those, who trust in the expiation of Christ, will certainly inherit the favour of God.*

In the text it is said, that God *set forth Christ as a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; that he may be just, when justifying him that believeth in Jesus.* The End, for which Christ was set forth as a propitiation, is, that God, consistently with justice, may justify those who believe in Christ. The peculiar and essential nature of the faith of such, as believe in Jesus, is in one important particular exactly defined, also, in the text, when it is styled *faith in his blood:* the faith, through which alone he is exhibited in the text as becoming a propitiation to men. This faith, or as I shall take the liberty to call it, *trust*, or *confidence;* (for such I hope hereafter to show it to be) is not, indeed, nor is it here asserted to be, faith in the atonement *only;* but it is faith in the atonement *pre-eminently.* We are required to believe in the whole character, and in all the offices, of Christ; but we are required, peculiarly, to believe in him, as the great propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Every one, who is the subject of this faith, the real, and only means by which we become interested in this propitiation, is amply exhibited in the text as entitled to justification.

That every such believer will certainly inherit the favour of God cannot be rationally doubted. While he was yet a sinner, condemned and ruined, God, moved by his infinite benevolence, sent into this world his beloved Son, to become incarnate; to become a subject of his law, and a substitute for mankind; to lead a life of humiliation; and to die the accursed death of the cross; that he might redeem such sinners from the curse of the law; from a guilty character, and the endless miseries of devouring fire. The condition, proposed by himself, on which we become entitled to the blessings of this redemption, are all summed up in this single phrase: *Faith in Christ*, and pre-eminently *in his atonement.* This condition the believer has performed; and is, therefore, entitled to these blessings. His title is secured to him by the covenant of Redemption, by the immutable promise of God to him, by the glory and excellency of Christ's mediation, and by that amazing and immense purpose of infinite love, which proposed, and accomplished, all the parts of this wonderful work. Who can doubt for a moment, that He, who proposed, He, who accomplished, this astonishing design, will go on to accomplish every thing, which it draws in its train? *He, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?* Can any thing be too dear to be given to those, for whom Christ was given? Can any thing be too great to be expected by those, who are united to the Son of God, as *members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones;* who are become *his seed* in the everlasting covenant; and to whom, unasked, he has from his own overflowing goodness given *the glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was?*

Let every believer, then, be completely assured, that his cause

is safe in the hands of God. *He has chosen the good part*, and it *shall never be taken from him.* He, who has begun to befriend him in this infinite concern, will *never leave him nor forsake him. All the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Though he fall, yet shall he rise again; and his mercy God will not utterly take from him.* In the seed, sown in his heart, *there is a blessing;* the beginning of immortal life. Cold and wintry as is the climate. beneath which it has sprung; unkind and barren as is the soil, in which it grows; doubtful and fading as we often see its progress; it cannot die. The hand, that planted it, will cultivate it with unceasing care; and will speedily remove it to a happier region, where it will flourish, and blossom, and bear fruit, for ever. *I am persuaded*, says St. *Paul, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2dly. *It is equally evident, that those, who reject the atonement of Christ, are without any hope of the divine favour.*

The favour of God is proffered to the inhabitants of this world through Christ alone; and those only are promised an interest in it, who cordially believe in him, as the expiation of sin. Had there been any other condition, upon which this glorious blessing could be communicated, the same benevolence, which planned and accomplished our redemption, would undoubtedly have communicated it to *us*. No such communication has, however, been made. On the contrary, it is often declared in the most explicit language, that *he who believeth not shall be damned.*

Even if the Scriptures had been silent, and no such awful declarations had been found in them, the nature of the subject holds out the strongest discouragement to every presumption of this kind. After such amazing efforts, made on the part of God, to bring mankind back from a state of rebellion, and to restore them to virtue and happiness, it cannot but be believed, that their obstinate continuance in sin must be regarded by him with supreme abhorrence. His law condemned them, for their original apostacy, to final ruin. To the guilt of this apostacy, unatoned, unrepented of, and therefore remaining in all its enormity, they, in this case, add the peculiar guilt of rejecting the singular, the eminently divine, goodness of God, manifested in this wonderful provision for their recovery. In what manner they could more contemptuously despise the divine character, in what manner they could more insolently affront the divine mercy, it is beyond my power to conceive. No other offer can be so kind; no other blessing so great; no other display of the divine character, of which we can form a conception, so lovely. The ingratitude, therefore, is wonderful; the insolence amazing; the guilt incomprehensible. *If*, then, *the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall these* unbelieving, *ungodly sinners appear?* If it be *a fearful thing* for all men, for heathen and for *Mohamme-*

*dans, to fall into the hands of the living God;* what must it be for these men, to whom Christ is offered freely, daily and alway; who sit, from the cradle to the grave, under the noon-day light of the Gospel, and bask, through life, in the beams of the Sun of righteousness.

Whence do these persons derive their hope? From their character? That could not save them under the law. It is the very guilt, for which they are condemned. From their repentance? They exercise none. Even if they did, it could never be accepted. A perfect repentance, as has been heretofore proved, cannot become an expiation for sin. But such repentance was never exhibited by men. Their repentance is not even a sorrow for sin. On the contrary, it is the mere dread of danger; a mere, terrified expectation of punishment. Who, however abandoned, does not, at times, experience such repentance, as this? Who ever dreamed, that the dread of death ought to excuse the felon from the gibbet?

Let every unbeliever, then, tremble at the approach of the judgment. Let him no longer *say* to himself, *Peace, peace; when sudden destruction is coming upon him.* Let him *turn to the strong hold, while he is* yet *a prisoner of hope. Let him turn to the Lord with all the heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth, if he will turn, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?*

3dly. *It is evident from the observations, made in these discourses, that mankind are infinitely indebted to Christ for expiating their sins.*

Christ by his atonement has redeemed mankind from under the curse of the law. The sufferings, to which they were doomed by this curse, were endless sufferings. Without an expiation, a deliverance from these sufferings was impossible. Equally impossible was it for any other person, beside Christ, to make an expiation. From mere compassion to our ruined world, he undertook the arduous labour of delivering us from these stupendous sufferings; and accomplished it, at the expense of his own blood. Infinitely *rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through him might become rich.* For him we had done nothing, and were disposed to do nothing. For us, influenced by his own overflowing goodness, he did all things. He taught us, as our prophet, *all things pertaining to life and godliness.* He lived before us, as our example; he died for us, as our Propitiation; he rose from the dead, as the Earnest of our resurrection to endless life. He entered heaven, as our Forerunner; he assumed the throne of the Universe, as our Ruler, Protector, and Benefactor. At the end of the world he will appear as our Judge and Rewarder; and will conduct to the mansions of eternal life, all those, who have cordially accepted of his mediation; and will there, throughout interminable ages, *feed them with living bread, and lead them to fountains of living waters.* To the obligations, conferred by such a benefactor, what limits

can be set? Our deliverance from sin and sorrow is a boundless good; our introduction to endless virtue and happiness is a boundless good. But of all this good the atonement of Christ is the foundation, the procuring cause, the commencement, and the security. *Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Such is the everlasting song, to which *the four living creatures* in the heavens subjoin their unceasing *Amen.*

With this glorious subject in our view, can we fail to be astonished at the manner in which the Saviour of the world is treated by multitudes of those, whom he came to redeem? By what multitudes is he regarded with cold-hearted unbelief, and stupid indifference? By what multitudes, with open opposition and avowed hostility? By what multitudes, with shameless contempt, insolent sneers, and impudent ridicule? How often is his glorious name profaned, and blasphemed, by those, whom he died to save from endless perdition? How many miserable wretches, tottering on the brink of eternal ruin, while in the house of God, while in this house, and while his agonies, endured for them, are resounding in their ears, quietly compose themselves to sleep, or busily employ themselves in whispering, amusement, and mirth; forgetful, that they have souls to be saved, or lost; and destitute of a wish to be interested in the Saviour. Had Christ been as regardless of these miserable beings, as they are of him; nay, as they are of themselves; what would have become of them in *the day of wrath?* What will become of them in that dreadful day, if they continue to treat Christ, as they have treated him hitherto?

4thly. *It is evident from these observations, that the Gospel alone furnishes a consistent scheme of salvation to mankind.*

The Gospel takes man, where it finds him, in a state of sin and ruin, condemned by the law of God to final perdition, and incapable of justification, by his own righteousness. In this situation, it announces to him a Saviour, divinely great and glorious, divinely excellent and lovely, assuming his nature, to become an expiation for his sins; revealing to him the way of reconciliation to God; and inviting him to enter it, and be saved. The acceptance of this expiation it announces from the mouth of God himself. The terms, on which we may be reconciled, it discloses with exact precision and perfect clearness; so that *he who runs may read;* so that beggars and children may understand, and accept them. Faith in the Redeemer, repentance towards God, and holiness of character, involve them all. They are terms, reasonable in themselves, easy to us, and productive of incomprehensible good to all who embrace them. To overcome the stubbornness of our hearts, Christ has commissioned the SPIRIT OF GRACE to sanctify us for himself; to draw us with the cords of his love; to guide us with his wisdom; to uphold us with his power; and to conduct us under his kind providence to the heavens. In this scheme is contained all that

we need, and all that we can rationally desire. The way of salvation is here become *a highway, and wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein.*

The Religion of the Gospel is a religion designed for *sinners.* By the expiation of Christ it opens the brazen door, which was for ever barred against their return. Here the supreme, and otherwise immoveable, obstacle to the acceptance of sinners, is taken away. If sinners were to be accepted, it was not *possible that this cup should pass from* Christ. The next great obstacle in the way of their acceptance is found in their unholy, disobedient hearts, propense *to evil only, and continually;* and the next, their perpetual exposure to backsliding, and to falling finally away. These obstacles, immoveable, also, by any means on this side of heaven, the Spirit of grace by his most merciful interference in our behalf entirely removes. Man, therefore, in the Gospel finds his return from apostacy made possible; made easy; made certain; actually begun; steadily carried on in the present world; and finally completed in the world to come.

But no other scheme of religion presents to us even plausible means of removing these difficulties. *Natural religion*, to which Infidels persuade us to betake ourselves for safety, does not even promise us a return to God. *Natural religion is the religion of law;* of that law, which in the only legal language declares to us, *Do these things, and thou shalt live: but the soul, that sinneth, shall die. These things*, the things specified in the requisitions of the law, we have not done; and therefore cannot live. We have sinned, and therefore must die. It has been formerly shown, that the law knows no condition of acceptance, or justification, but obedience. Concerning repentance, faith, forgiveness, and reconciliation, concerning the sinner's return to God, and his admission to immortal life, the law is silent. Its only sentence, pronounced on those who disobey, is a sentence of final condemnation.

Whatever we may suppose the law to be, we have disobeyed its precepts. Nothing has been ever devised, or received, by man as a law of God, which all men have not disobeyed. Infidels cannot devise such a law, as they will dare to call a law of God, and publish to men under this title, which they themselves, and all other men, have not often disobeyed. From the very nature of law, a nature inseparable from its existence as a law, disobedience to its precepts must be condemned: and, if nothing interfere to preserve the offender from punishment, he must of necessity suffer. To what degree, in what modes, through what extent, these sufferings will reach, the Infidel cannot conjecture. To his anguish no end appears. Of such an end no arguments can be furnished by his mind; no tidings have reached his ear; and no hopes can rationally arise in his heart. Death, with all the gloomy scenes attendant upon a dying bed, is to him merely the commencement of doubt, fear, and sorrow. The grave, to him, is the entrance into a world,

of absolute and eternal darkness. That world, hung round with fear, amazement, and despair, overcast with midnight, melancholy with solitude, desolate of every hope of real good, opens to him through the dreary passage of the grave. Beyond this entrance he sees nothing, he knows nothing, he can conjecture nothing, but what must fill his heart with alarm, and make his death-bed a couch of thorns. With a suspense, scarcely less terrible than the miseries of damnation itself, his soul lingers over the vast and desolate abyss; when, compelled by an unseen and irresistible hand, it plunges into this uncertain and irreversible doom, to learn by experience what is the measure of wo, destined to reward those, *who obey not God*, and reject the salvation proffered by his Son.

In such a situation what man, not yet lost to sense and thought, not yet convinced, that he has committed the sin which cannot be forgiven, would not hail with transport the dawn of the Gospel; the clear rising of the Sun of righteousness; to illumine his path through this melancholy world; to dispel the darkness of the grave; to shed a benevolent light upon the entrance into eternity, and brighten his passage to the heavens!

# SERMON LVIII.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.—HIS INTERCESSION.

HEBREWS vii. 24, 25.—*But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able, also, to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

HAVING in a series of discourses examined, as far as I thought it necessary, *the personal holiness of Christ; and his atonement for sin;* I shall now proceed in the order, originally proposed, to consider *his Intercession.*

In the first verse of the text, St. *Paul* declares, that *Christ*, in contradistinction to earthly high priests, *has an unchangeable priesthood;* or, as the original more exactly signifies, *a priesthood which passeth not from one hand to another.* In the last verse, he infers from this fact, that *he is able to save his followers to the uttermost, because he ever lives to make intercession for them.* The Intercession of Christ, therefore, is here declared to *be real;* to be *made for his followers;* and to *be effectual* to *their salvation.* Of course, it claims, in a high degree, our serious attention.

*To intercede* denotes, originally, *to go between one person and another.* In its secondary, or figurative, sense, the only one in which it seems now to be used, it denotes *offering petitions in behalf of another;* and, in the Scriptures, *offering such petitions to God.* On this subject we have St. *John* as a Commentator, to direct us. *If any man sin*, says this Apostle, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The original word, here translated *advocate*, is παρακλητος. It denotes either *a person*, who, in the Roman courts under the appellation of *Patronus*, *attended a client*, and in countenancing, advising, and interceding, for him, took an efficacious care of his interest: or an *Agent of one of the States, either allied, or tributary, to Rome*, who took a similar care of the interests of that State before the Roman Government, and interceded, from time to time, with the Emperor on its behalf, as those interests demanded. Such is one of the offices, assumed by Christ in the heavens.

It will be seen at a glance, that this subject is merely a Scriptural one. All our knowledge concerning it is derived from Revelation only. Reason can add nothing, but conjecture, to what the Scriptures have taught; and you are not *now* to learn, that additions of this nature are of very little value. The observations, which I propose to make concerning it, I shall arrange under the following heads.

I. *The Character and Circumstances of those for whom Christ intercedes:*

II. *The Manner, in which his intercession is performed.*

Under the former of these heads I observe,

1st. *That they are the Children of God.*

In proof of this position I cite the following passages.

1st. *The text. Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him: seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* It cannot but be seen, that St. *Paul* speaks here of no other intercession, than that which is made for such as come unto God by Christ.

2dly. *The passage already quoted from* 1 *John* ii. 1, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The persons who are here said to have an advocate with the Father, are the persons denoted by the word *we:* that is, St. *John, and those to whom he writes;* or whom he here styles *little children:* in other words, *the children of God.*

3dly. *Romans* viii. 34, *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died: yea* rather, *that has risen again: who is even at the right hand of God; who, also, maketh intercession for us.* The persons for whom Christ is here said to intercede, are those included in the word *us;* those, *who in the preceding verse are called God's elect;* and of whom it is said, *that none shall hereafter be able to lay any thing to their charge;* and of whom in the verses following it is declared, *that nothing*, whether *present*, or *future*, *shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I know of no passage in the Scriptures, which even seems to teach any other doctrine, except *Isaiah* liii. 12, *And he made intercession for the transgressors.* Of this passage I observe, *first, that saints may be, and with the utmost propriety are, considered as designed by the word transgressors, in this place.* Saints, both before and after their regeneration, are transgressors; and in this character, only, need the intercession of Christ.

Secondly, *the murderers of Christ are very naturally designated, in this place, by transgressors*: and the passage may be considered as a prophecy of the intercession, which he made for them on the cross.

In the same verse it is said, *He was numbered with the transgressors:* that is, with the thieves, between whom he was crucified; and with all the other capital criminals, condemned to the same death. All these were eminently transgressors; and with them he was numbered, or reckoned, when he was pronounced to have the same character, and sentenced to the same infamy and suffering. As the word *transgressors* denotes malefactors, or murderers, in *the former* of these clauses, it is very naturally understood to denote persons of the same character in *the latter.* In the former clause,

also, the prophet speaks of *one* fact, which took place on the day of Christ's crucifixion: it is very naturally supposed, therefore, that he pursues the same subject through the verse, and that the intercession, mentioned by him, was made on the same day. If these remarks are just, the prophet may be fairly considered as predicting, in this passage, the prayer of Christ for his murderers: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!* This was a real and wonderful instance of intercession; and was gloriously answered in the conversion of several thousands of these persons to the faith and obedience of the Gospel.

2dly. *The Children of God are, still, the subjects of backsliding, and sin, in greater or less degrees, while they live.*

In every child of God there still exists *a law in his members, which wars against the law in his mind, and often brings him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members.* It is to be remembered, that all such sins are committed not only against the law, but against the grace, of God; and are aggravated by this high consideration. *Originally*, they were apostates; but afterwards they were reconciled to God by faith in the blood of his Son. For this unspeakable blessing their obligations to obedience are increased beyond measure. Against these obligations, and against their own solemn covenant, recognizing and enhancing them, they still have sinned. Their ingratitude, therefore, is peculiar, and all their transgressions are heightened by the amazing consideration, that they have been redeemed, sanctified, and forgiven.

3dly. *Notwithstanding their backslidings, they are not utterly cast off.*

*My mercy*, saith God, *will I keep for him for evermore; and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed, also, will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments: Then will I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.* Psalm lxxxix. 28—33. This is the universal language of the Scriptures concerning this subject. *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair; chastened, but not killed.* Such is the language of the Apostles; and such was their condition. Such, also, in various respects, is that of all their followers.

For the obliteration of the sins of persons, so circumstanced, it cannot be irrational to suppose, that some provision would be made by Him, who sent his Son to die for them; and who had promised in the covenant of Redemption, that *they should endure for ever.*

II. *I shall consider the Manner, in which the Intercession of Christ is performed.*

On this subject I observe,

1st. *Some of the ancients were of opinion, that Christ executes this office by presenting, continually, his human nature before the throne of his Father.* *Aquinas*, also, a more modern writer, says, "Christ intercedes for us by exhibiting, with a desire of our salvation, to the view of the Father, the human nature assumed for us, and the mysteries celebrated, or accomplished, in it."

It will be admitted on all hands, *that Christ does thus exhibit his human nature* in the heavens; nor can it be denied, that this is a continual exhibition of what he has done, and suffered for the glory of his Father, and the salvation of his Church. All this was done by him in the human nature; which is, therefore, an unceasing and affecting symbol of his wonderful labours for these great ends. The same exhibition is, also, a strong and constant memorial of his own love to his followers, and his earnest desires that they may be forgiven and saved. These desires, therefore, together with these labours and sufferings, being all forcibly exhibited in this presentation of his human nature before *the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;* it is, I think, a well-founded opinion, that in this manner, the intercession of Christ is, partially at least, performed. In support of this opinion, we are to remember that the high priest, whose intercession was a type of that of Christ, made this intercession, *not by offering prayers for the people in the most holy place, but by sprinkling the blood of sacrifices on the mercy-seat.* As the blood of the sacrifice was here presented before God by way of intercession; so Christ is considered as presenting the memorials of his sacrifice before God in the heavens: and as the high priest by this act opened to the Israelites the earthly holy places; so Christ is considered as in the like manner opening the heavenly holy places to his own followers for ever.

2dly. *Christ pleads, substantially, for the forgiveness of the sins of his followers, their preservation in holiness, and their final acceptance into heaven.*

Intercession in its very nature involves petition. The manner in which it is performed may vary; but the substance is always the same. In whatever manner, therefore, Christ may be supposed to intercede for his children, he must, substantially, offer up petitions on their behalf. That they need this intercession cannot be rationally doubted. The blessings, to which they are conducted, are the greatest of all blessings; their final forgiveness, acceptance, purification, and eternal life. Of these and all other blessings they are wholly unworthy. That much is necessary to be done for such persons, in order to save them from punishment, and secure to them immortal happiness, is a doctrine accordant with the dictates of common sense. In this world great evils are remitted, and great blessings procured, to the undeserving, by the intercession of the worthy and honourable. Analogy, therefore, leads us to look to similar means, for the accomplishment of similar pur-

poses, in the Universal providence of God. Especially will this seem natural, and necessary, where the greatest blessings are to be obtained for those, who are *unworthy of the least of all blessings.*

3dly. *In John 17th we have, if I mistake not, an example of this very intercession.*

This chapter is the last communication of Christ to his Apostles before his death. In it he recites, briefly, his wonderful labours for the glory of his Father, and for the good of his children; declares, that he had finished the work allotted to him; and announces, that he was bidding adieu to the scene of his humiliation, and preparing to enter into his glory.

On these grounds, he prays his Father to sanctify, and perfect, his children; to keep them, while they were in the world, from the evil; to make them one in their spirit, their character, and their pursuits; and to cause the love, which *He* exercised towards Christ, to rest upon them. At the same time, he declares, that he had given to them his own glory; and that it was his will, that they should be where he was, and behold his glory for ever. All these illustrious things, also, he solicits, on the ground of his Father's love to him, and his own labours and sufferings in obedience to His will.

In this prayer of Christ we have probably a fair specimen of his intercession in the heavens. The same things are recited, and the same things requested, here, which we are taught to expect there; and all is asked of God, which can contribute to their safety, or their happiness.

If these observations be allowed to be just; it will be seen, that the great ends of Christ's intercession are to preserve his followers from final backsliding; an evil, to which, if left to themselves, they would certainly be exposed, notwithstanding all the virtuous principles which they possess: to obtain the forgiveness of those sins, which they commit after their Regeneration: and to secure their reception into the world of glory. These ends are of the highest importance to them, and in the highest degree declarative of the goodness of God.

This method of proceeding, on the part of God, is wholly accordant with the common dictates of the human mind. Similar means, as I have observed, are used, and efficaciously used, to procure the remission of punishment, and the enjoyment of good, for unworthy men in the present world. That which is done here, therefore, and has ever been done with the plainest propriety, and the most decisive efficacy, strongly illustrates the reasonableness and propriety of what is thus done in the heavens.

From these observations I infer,

1st. *The perfect Safety of the Children of God.*

Christ, the Son of God, and the infinitely meritorious Redeemer of men, intercedes for their preservation in holiness, the forgiveness

of their backslidings, and their final acceptance into heaven. *The Father always heareth the Son.* It is impossible, that his intercession should fail, or that the purposes of it should not be accomplished. His followers, therefore, though exposed to ten thousand dangers, and to numberless temptations, enemies, and backslidings; though always in a state of peril, and living only a doubtful and scarcely perceptible life; will pass safely through all these hazards, and finally arrive at the possession of perfect holiness and everlasting joy.

In the preceding discourse I evinced the truth of this doctrine by arguments, drawn from the *Atonement of Christ.* It is equally evident from *his intercession.* Christ, in his prayer at the tomb of *Lazarus*, says to the Father, *I knew that thou hearest me always.* In his Intercessory prayer, in the xvii. of *John*, he declares, that he intercedes, not only for his Apostles and their fellow-disciples then existing, but also *for them, who should believe on him through their word;* that is, *the Gospel.* Those then, who believe on him through the Gospel, are universally interested in that intercession of Christ, which the Father heareth always. Of course, their safety is complete, their interest in the divine favour indefeasible, and their title to endless life unalterably secure.

2dly. *We have here a strong proof, that Christ is unchangeable.*

In Proverbs 8th, after giving a variety of testimonies of his compassion for sinners, he informs us, that *before the mountains were settled, or the earth was made, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth*, in a glorious foresight of the good, which he intended to accomplish; and that *his delights were from* eternity *with the sons of men.* In the indulgence of this divine benignity, though infinitely *rich* in the possession of all good, *yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through him might become rich. The Word*, who *was in the beginning with God*, and *by whom all things were made, became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.* While he dwelt in this Apostate world, he underwent a course of extreme humiliation, labours, and sufferings, for the sake of mankind; and, in the end, purchased for them the regeneration of the soul, and a title to everlasting life, with the agonies of the cross.

To the heavens he has gone before, *to prepare a place for them, and to receive them to himself.* In that glorious world, amid all the splendours of his exaltation, he forgets not for a moment those worms of the dust, whom he came to redeem; those backsliding, frail, sinning apostates, for whom he poured out his blood on the accursed tree; but, in the strong language of the Apostle, *ever lives to make intercession for them.* By his intercession, as well as by his government, he secures their continuance in holiness; *cleanses them from secret faults; restrains them from presumptuous sins;* and thus keeps them *innocent of the great transgression.*

Thus his love is, from everlasting to everlasting, the same boundless love to himself, divinely glorious; to them great beyond example, beneficial beyond degree.

3dly. *The intercession of Christ most affectingly teaches us the Grace of God in the salvation of sinners.*

Sinners are originally redeemed, forgiven, and sanctified, by the mere, sovereign goodness of God. After all these mighty works are accomplished, they are still guilty and undeserving; they need the intercession, as well as the atonement, of Christ; and without it could not, so far as we are informed, be with propriety blessed in the heavens. In consequence of this intercession, they are preserved from fatal declension; their sins, committed after their regeneration, are forgiven; and themselves admitted to the presence of God.

In heaven, this intercession is continued for ever. Throughout eternity, the children of God are thus furnished with the strongest evidence, that their everlasting happiness is the result of mere, sovereign goodness and mercy; and that all the glory of devising, accomplishing, and bestowing, this happiness is to be ascribed to Him. The praises of the heavenly world, and the gratitude whence they spring, will from this source derive a more exquisite rapture; their sense of dependence on God be more humble, intense, and lovely; and their perseverance in holiness find the most delightful, as well as the most powerful, motives.

4thly. *How wonderful is the love of Christ to sinners!*

It is beyond measure wonderful, that he should love them at all. What are they? Guilty, rebellious, odious creatures; opposed to his will, designs, and character; requiting his love with ingratitude, hatred, and contempt; *crucifying him afresh by their unbelief; and accounting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.* Why did he love them? Not because they were rational beings. With a word he could have created millions of such beings, for one of them; and all more rational, and more exalted, than themselves. Not because of their moral excellence; for they had none. Not because he needed them; for he cannot need any thing; and they possessed nothing, which they did not receive from him.

On the contrary, all his conduct towards them sprang from his own boundless good-will: his disinterested love. *They* were not deserving; but *he* was pitiful; they were not valuable; but he was bountiful; they were not necessary to him; but he was infinitely necessary to them. *Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us.* It was because Christ was superlatively good; and because we were *poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things* that this glorious Person had compassion on us in our apostacy and ruin. He lived and died, he reigns and intercedes, that we might live, and not die. This great work he began to execute here; and he carries it on in the heavens throughout eternity.

In that world of glory, although elevated to the throne of the Universe, and beholding all things beneath his feet; although loved, obeyed, and worshipped, with supreme attachment and homage by the great kingdom of virtuous beings; he assumes, and executes, the office of an intercessor for the fallen children of *Adam*. In that world *he is not ashamed to call them*, however degraded by their apostacy, and however odious by their guilt, by the endearing names of *friends* and *brethren*. He is the universal ruler; but he is not ashamed to appear as the *Elder Brother*, *the First-born* of this human assembly; nay, as a suppliant for those whom he rules. He is a person of infinite dignity and perfection; but he is not ashamed to appear as a companion to those, who could originally *say to corruption, Thou art our father, and to the worm, Thou art our mother and our sister*. Thus the character, which he exhibited on earth, he sustains in heaven. He is still in the same manner *meek and lowly of heart;* and still *feeds* his disciples and *leads them to fountains of living waters*. To him they have been indebted for the atonement of their sins, and the salvation of their souls; and to him they will be infinitely indebted for the communication of knowledge, holiness, and enjoyment, throughout the endless ages of their being.

What character can be compared with this? Before it, how does all other excellence fade! In it what exaltation and condescension are blended! What greatness and benignity united! What must be the Mind, in which these majestic, and these sweet and lovely, characteristics thus unchangeably and for ever harmonize: a mind supremely great and glorious in the lowly station of a man; a child; a servant to a humble artisan; and divinely meek and condescending in the infinite splendour of universal dominion! What dishonour is here reflected on the pride of Men and fallen Angels! Pride, unsatisfied with all present attainments, and making the greatest communications, from God, of distinction and glory, the mere foundations of claiming more, and of murmuring, because they are not elevated to higher honours, and replenished with more extensive enjoyments! How poor, how debased, how odious, how guilty, is that pride! How contemptible does it appear, when compared with the Redeemer's condescension! In heaven there is no pride; on earth, and in hell, it is the prevailing character. Men are proud; fallen Angels are proud. Christ is *meek and lowly of heart*. What would become of the universe, were pride to find a place in the infinite Mind?

5thly. *How differently are Christians regarded by Christ, and by evil men?*

Christ descended from heaven, and left *the glory, which he had with the Father before ever the world was*, to befriend Christians. He became a man; he lived; he laboured through life; he hung upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb; to redeem them from sin and death. He arose from the dead; ascended to heaven; *sat*

*down on the right hand of the majesty on high;* became *head over all things*, governs all things; and intercedes with his Father for ever; for the benefit of Christians. To save and bless them is, in a sense, his professional employment throughout eternity.

How different is the conduct of evil men towards the very same persons! In the eyes of these men, Christians are objects of contempt and hatred; and in their customary language are styled superstitious, enthusiasts, hypocrites, fanatics, and bigots. Men of the same character mocked and crucified Christ; their followers have ever since exhibited the same spirit; at times in the same, at other times in different manners; but in all its exhibitions the spirit has been the same.

Reason would naturally ask, when contemplating this subject, What evil have Christians done, to merit this treatment? Have they injured these enemies? Have they injured the public? Are they not as industrious, as peaceable, as just, as sincere, as kind, as useful, as other men? Do they not, as parents, children, friends, neighbours, magistrates, and citizens, perform the duties of life as faithfully, as those who are not Christians? Do they transgress the laws, oppose the government, or disturb the peace, of society, more than their enemies themselves? If they are guilty of such crimes, it can undoubtedly be proved; it ought to be proved; and they ought, accordingly, to be condemned and punished. To this no fair objection can be made even by Christians themselves.

But how far from these dictates of reason has been all the conduct of their adversaries? Have they even attempted any proof of this nature? Have not their accusations been general and indefinite, like the outcry raised against Paul and his companions: *These, that have turned the world upside down, have come hither also:* the mere exclamations of undiscriminating malevolence; not the specific charges of sober conviction.

To this malevolence what an endless train of men, women, and children; of men, covered with the hoary locks of age, of children, scarcely escaped from the cradle; have been offered up on the altar of persecution! What multitudes by the ancient Heathen, what multitudes by the idolatrous Apostates from Christianity; what multitudes by the Infidels, of modern times!

Where law and government have prevented these atrocities, how many private and personal injuries, how many sneers, and taunts, how many stings of gall and bitterness, has Christianity been obliged to endure! How many aspersions have been cast on their doctrines, designs, and characters, merely to load them with shame! How frequently are their best intentions misconstrued, and their most benevolent labours perverted, in this very land, originally peopled by Christians, and consecrated to religion: this land *converted by Christians* from a wilderness into a habitation of industry, peace, civilization, and happiness: to change which from a howling wilderness into an asylum of persecuted piety, Christians

encountered the perils of the Ocean, and the sufferings of the desert; sustained all the horrors of savage war, and all the evils of famine, disease, and death. In this very land, how many enemies have arisen up to the Church of God, among the descendants of these very Christians, and among the brethren of those who are persecuted! They know not, perhaps, that their curses are directed to the *fathers who begat them*, or that *their eye is evil towards the mothers who bore them;* nor mistrust, that their scorn is pointed against the source, whence, under God, they have derived every enjoyment, and every hope.

Against this source of blessings, the religion of Christians, they are more malignant, than even against Christians themselves. The Bible is hated more than those who believe it; the doctrines and duties of Christianity more than its professors. What are those duties? They are all summed up in those two great precepts, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself;* and in *the means of producing obedience to these precepts in the soul of man.* What is there in these precepts, which can be the object of vindicable hatred? Who will stand up, and say; who will say in the recesses of his own heart; "It is an odious and contemptible thing to love God; to obey his voice; to believe in his Son; to shun the anger of God; to escape from endless sin and misery; and to attain everlasting virtue and happiness;" Or is it, in the view of common sense, wise to choose the anger of God rather than his favour, a depraved character rather than a virtuous one, the company of apostates and fiends rather than of saints and angels, and hell rather than heaven?

Is it odious, is it contemptible, is it ridiculous, does it deserve obloquy and persecution, to *love our neighbour as ourselves;* to exhibit universal kindness; to deal justly; to speak truth; to fulfil promises; to relieve the distressed; to obey laws; to reverence magistrates; to resist temptation; to be sober, chaste, and temperate; and to follow all things, which are *honest, pure, lovely, and of good report?*

Is it, on the contrary, honourable; is it praiseworthy; does it merit esteem and reward; to be impious, profane, and blasphemous; to be infidels; to have a seared conscience; to possess a hard heart; to be unjust, unkind, and unfaithful; to be false, perjured, and seditious; to be light-minded, lewd, and gluttonous?

Is not the true reason of all this hostility to Christians, the plain superiority of their character to that of their enemies? Does not the hatred arise from their consciousness of this superiority; from the impatience which they feel, whenever they behold it; from the wounds, which neighbouring excellence always inflicts? Do they not feel, that good men cast a shade upon their character; reprove them, at least by the silent and powerful voice of their own virtue; serve as a second conscience, to hold out their sin before their eyes; and alarm their hearts with a secret and irresistible sense of

future danger? Do not wicked men say in their hearts, as they said at the time when the *Wisdom of Solomon* was written: *Therefore let us lie in wait for the righteous, because he is not for our turn; and he is clean contrary to our doings. He upbraideth us with our offending the law; and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our education. He professeth to have the knowledge of God; and calleth himself the child of the Lord. He was made to reprove our thoughts. He is grievous unto us, even to behold: for his life is not like other men's; his ways are of another fashion. We are esteemed of him as counterfeits; he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness; he pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed; and maketh his boast, that God is his Father. Let us see, if his words be true; and let us prove what shall happen in the end of him. Let us examine him with despitefulness, and torture, that we may know his meekness, and prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a shameful death: for by his own saying he shall be respected.* Apply this description; and you will find it as exact, and just, as if it had been written yesterday, and intended to mark out, in the most definite manner, the loose and profligate of our own land.

But let Christians remember, that these things will not always be. The time will come; it will soon come; when their enemies, however numerous, proud, and prosperous, *will, like sheep, be laid in the grave. Death shall feed on them; and the worm shall cover them. Their beauty shall consume away; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.* Then shall all the just *be far from oppression; for they shall not fear; and from terror; for it shall not come near them.* God shall *redeem them from the power of the grave;* and *shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* Then shall it be seen, that their *light affliction*, in the present world, was *but for a moment*, and that its real and happy efficacy was no other, than to *work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

# SERMON LIX.

## CHARACTER OF CHRIST, AS A KING.

EPHESIANS i. 20—22.—*Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet; and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church.*

I HAVE now in a series of sermons examined the character of Christ, as *the prophet, and high priest, of mankind.* Under his *prophetical character* I have considered *his preaching, by himself, and by his Apostles; the Things, taught by both; the Manner, in which they were taught; and their consequences.* Under his *Priesthood* I have considered *his personal holiness; his atonement; and his Intercession.*

I shall now, according to the original scheme mentioned when I began to discuss the mediation of Christ, proceed to consider *his character as a King.*

That this character is given to Christ in the Scriptures, in instances almost literally innumerable, is perfectly well known to every reader of the Bible. In the second *Psalm*, there is a solemn annunciation of the Kingly office of Christ to the world. It is introduced with these words: *I have set*, or as in the Hebrew, have anointed, *My King on my holy hill of Zion. Unto us*, says *Isaiah, a child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the Government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace; and of the increase of his Government, and of his peace, there shall be no end: Upon the throne of David, and upon his Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. The Lord hath sworn*, says *David*, and *will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek. Melchisedek* was both a King and a priest. The priesthood of Christ, therefore, was a *royal priesthood;* or the priesthood of a person who was, at the same time, *a King:* Like *Melchisedek, a King of righteousness*, and a *King of peace. Thy throne, O God*, says *David, is for ever and ever; and the sceptre of thy Kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness. He shall reign*, says *Gabriel*, when predicting his birth to *Mary, He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end. His name*, says St. *John, is called the Word of God; and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written; King of kings and Lord of lords.*

In the text we are presented with several interesting particulars concerning the Kingly office of Christ, which shall now be the subject of our consideration.

We are taught in this passage,

I. *That God hath exalted Christ to this Dominion:*

II. *The Extent of this Dominion:*

III. *That this Dominion was given, and assumed, for the benefit of the Church.*

I. *We are taught that God hath exalted Christ to this Dominion.*

This doctrine is repeatedly taught in the text, in the following expressions. *He set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. He hath put all things under his feet. He gave him to be head over all things.* In these expressions the exaltation of Christ to the dominion and dignity, ascribed to him in the text, is as unequivocally attributed to the Father, as it can be in human language. Of course, their plain import must be acknowledged by every Christian. I insist on this doctrine of the text; I have insisted on it, particularly, because it has been made by *Unitarians* an argument against the Divinity of Christ. "If," they say, "Christ is a Divine person; whence is it, that we hear so many things, said in the Scriptures concerning his exaltation; and particularly of his exaltation by the Father? If Christ is God; how is it possible, that he should be in any sense exalted? But, should we, contrary to plain probability, suppose him to have undergone voluntarily an apparent humiliation; can he, who is truly God, be indebted to any other, than himself, for a restoration to his former dignity and greatness? To be exalted at all, necessarily involves a preceding state of inferiority, particularly, to the state, to which he is exalted; and, certainly, of inferiority to the proper state and character of Jehovah. He, who has all power, knowledge, wisdom, and greatness, cannot have more; and, therefore, can in no sense be exalted. To be exalted *by another person*, also, involves dependence on that person: and a dependent being cannot be God."

As this, in my view, is the most plausible argument against the Divinity of Christ; and that, which has had more weight in my own mind, than any other; though, I believe, less relied on, and less insisted on, by *Unitarians*, than some others; I shall consider it with particular attention.

As a preface to the answer, which I intend to this objection, I observe, that the argument, contained in it, is in my own view conclusive; and, if applied to the subject without any error, must be admitted in its full force. The error of those, who use it, lies in the application, made of it to Christ. That exaltation involves a state of preceding inferiority, is, I apprehend, intuitively certain; and that he, who is exalted by another, must be a dependent being; dependent on him, by whom he is exalted; cannot be denied. Let us see how far this argument is applicable to Christ; and how far it will conclude against his Deity.

It must be acknowledged by all *Trinitarians*, as well as others, that, if Christ be God in the true and proper sense, it is impossible for him to be exalted above the dignity and greatness, which he originally and alway possessed. He cannot be more powerful, wise, or excellent. He originally possessed all things; and, therefore, can have nothing given to him. It cannot, of course, be in this sense, that the scriptural writers speak of Christ as exalted.

But it is equally clear, and will be equally insisted on by every *Trinitarian*, that Christ is *man* as well as *God*. In this character, it is evident, that he can receive exaltation; and *that*, to any degree less than infinite. It is further evident, according to the *Trinitarian* doctrine concerning Christ, that the *Messiah*, or *Mediator*, Jesus Christ, is distinguishable from Christ, considered as God, and from Christ considered as man: being constituted by the union of the Eternal Word with the man Christ Jesus: *An union*, as the *Westminster Assembly* express it, *of two distinct natures in one person for ever*. This Mediator, in his complete character, began to exist at the birth of the man Jesus Christ; as being a person, then new to the Universe. Of this Mediator, then commencing his perfect existence, the predictions concerning the Kingdom of Christ, and the accounts concerning his assumption of that Kingdom, are, I apprehend, all, or nearly all, written. It is of the Mediator, that it is said, *I set my King on the holy hill of Zion*. It is of the *Son* who was *born*, and whose *name was called Wonderful; Counsellor; the mighty God;* on whose *shoulder the Government was to be placed*. Of the Mediator, *Gabriel* said, *He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end*. Of the Mediator, St. *Paul* says, *Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth*. It is of the Mediator, that it is said in the text, *God set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above every name, that is named in this world, and in that which is to come:* and that it is further said, *He hath put all things under his feet; and given him to be head over all things to his Church*.

As the Mediator, Jesus Christ began to exist at the birth of the man Jesus Christ; so, until his resurrection, he existed in a state of humiliation only. The Word, though originally *in the form of God, and* justly *thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet voluntarily took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*. In this form, or character, of a Servant, he fulfilled all the several duties, which he had engaged to perform; and in this humble character he acted, till he arose from the dead.

It will not be denied, that this person, allowing him to have existed, was capable of exaltation; nor that, if he received it at all,

he must receive it from Him, under whose commission he acted, and to whom he had voluntarily become a servant, when *he was made in the likeness of men.*

This person, it is plain, had received no Kingdom, until his ascension to heaven; had not before been *head over all things to the Church;* nor been *exalted above every name that is named in this world, and that to come.* This Kingdom is frequently spoken of as the reward of the labours and sufferings of Christ, in the character of Mediator. These labours and sufferings had never before existed; and, therefore, could not have been rewarded at an earlier period.

From these views of the subject it is clear, that although Christ, as God, was incapable of exaltation, equally as of suffering; yet, as Mediator, he was capable of both; and that his exaltation was with perfect propriety given him by the glorious Person, under whose authority he placed himself by voluntarily assuming the form of a servant. In this view of the subject the *Trinitarians* are so far from being inconsistent with themselves, that they merely accord with the necessary consequences of their own doctrine.

II. *We are taught in the text the Extent of this Kingdom.*

The word *Kingdom* sometimes denotes the rule, which is exercised by a King; and sometimes the persons and regions, which he rules. According to the former of these senses, *David* says, *Thou hast prepared thy throne in the heavens; and thy Kingdom is over all.* Of the latter sense, *It shall be given thee, to the half of the Kingdom*, is an example.

1st. Then, *the Kingdom of Christ is the Universe.*

In *the text*, the extent of Christ's kingdom is repeatedly denoted by the phrase *all things.* The absolute universality of this phrase is sufficiently manifest from the text itself, when it is said, that *he is set at the right hand of God, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named in this world, and that which is to come.* But it is placed beyond all doubt in the corresponding passage in Philippians ii. 10, where it is said, that *every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord. Heaven and Earth*, is the phrase, by which the Jews denoted the Universe. When they meant to express this idea with emphasis, they sometimes added the phrase, *under the Earth.* Here we have the most emphatical language, ever used by a Jew to denote the Universe, and all things which it contains. *Every knee* in this vast dominion we are assured *will* one day *bow* to Christ; and *every tongue* found in it will confess, at a future period, that Christ is Lord. In the same manner, in Colossians i. 16, *All things are said to be created by him, and for him; whether they be visible or invisible, whether in heaven or in earth.* As in this absolutely universal sense they

were made *by* and *for* himself; so from this passage we cannot doubt, that in the same sense they will be his absolute possession; and *that after*, as well as *before*, he became Mediator. This world, therefore, the planetary system, the stellary systems, the highest heavens above, and hell beneath, are all included, and alike included, in the immense empire, of which he is the head. Men are his subjects. Angels both fallen and virtuous are his subjects; and the inhabitants of the innumerable worlds, which compose the Universe, *confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2dly. *His authority over this great kingdom is supreme.*

The whole course of providence is under his immediate control. *He upholds all things by the word of his power;* and directs them with an universal and irresistible agency to their proper ends. The affairs of this world, and all its inhabitants, are directed by his hand. He has the *keys of hell and of death*, or of the world of departed spirits. *He openeth, and no one shutteth; and shutteth, and no one openeth.* Into that world none enter without his bidding; and out of it none can come but by his permission. The world of misery, beneath, is in the same manner under his absolute dominion; and the glorious system of happiness in the heavens, above, is the mere result of his wisdom, goodness, and power.

In the exercise of this dominion he will, at the close of this providential system, summon the dead from the grave; consume the world with fire; and judge both the righteous and the wicked, both Angels and men. In the exercise of the same authority, also, he will send the wicked down to the regions of darkness, and *punish them with an everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power.*

III. *We are taught in the text, that this kingdom was given, and assumed, for the benefit of the Church.*

This doctrine is directly asserted in the text; and will, therefore, not be questioned. In the exercise of this Government over all things for the benefit of his Church, *He*, in the

1st place, *Defends it from all his enemies.*

The enemies of Christians are their temptations, internal and external; their sins; death; evil men; and evil angels.

Against their *temptations* he furnishes them with defence by all the instructions, precepts, warnings, reproofs, threatenings, and promises which are contained in his Word. These constitute a continual and efficacious protection from the influence of the lusts within, and the enemies without, by rectifying the views of the soul concerning its interest and duty; awakening in it solemn consideration; alarming it with affecting apprehensions; encouraging it with hope; alluring it with love and gratitude; stimulating it with the prospect of a glorious reward; and thus prompting it to suspend the dangerous purpose, to watch against the rising sin, to

oppose with vigour the intruding temptation, and to pray unceasingly for that divine assistance, which *every one that asketh shall receive.*

To the means of defence, furnished by his word, he adds continually the peculiar influences of his Spirit. This glorious Agent, commissioned by Christ for this divine purpose, diffuses through the soul the spirit of resistance, the hope of victory, the strength necessary to obtain it, and the peace and joy which are its happy as well as unfailing consequences.

From their *sins* he *began* to deliver them by his Atonement. This work he *carries on* by his intercession; and completes by his providence. In the present world, where all things are imperfect, this deliverance partakes, it must be acknowledged, of the common nature: yet it is such, as to secure them from every fatal evil; and such, as we know to be one of those *things*, which *work together for their good.* Their progress towards perfect holiness is slow, irregular, and interrupted: yet it is real, and important: producing hope, comfort, and perseverance unto the end.

At the *Judgment* this deliverance will be complete. There the glorious effects of his Atonement and Intercession will be all realized. Every one of his followers will find himself entirely interested in them both; and will see, at that trying period, all his sins washed away, and nothing left to be *laid to his charge.* These dreadful enemies, at this dreadful season, will be powerless, and overthrown; and Christians will *be more than conquerors through him that hath loved them.*

From *Death* he has taken away its sting, and from the grave its victory. Death, so terrible to the impenitent, will be found by them to be no other than a rough, gloomy, unwelcome messenger; sent to summon them to the house of their Father. Over all its dangerous power they will triumph in a glorious manner; and be enabled to sing with everlasting exultation, *O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?* All the preceding diseases, sorrows, and trials, through which they have passed in this vale of tears, they will distinctly perceive to have been scarcely enemies at all. On the contrary, they will appear to have been sent with infinite kindness, to check them in the career of iniquity, to warn them of approaching danger, or existing sin, and to call them effectually to the path of life.

Against *evil men* and *evil Angels* he furnishes them, throughout their pilgrimage, with a continual and sufficient protection: not a protection, indeed, which will prevent them from suffering and sorrow; but this is because suffering and sorrow are necessary to their safety and improvement. *Hence*, they are maligned, calumniated, despised, persecuted, and at times brought to a violent death. They are, also, at times perplexed, ensnared, allured, and tempted to wander from their duty, by art, sophistry, and falsehood. By the *former* class of evils they are gradually weaned from that *love*

*of the world*, that desire of human favour, and that lust for human applause, which so naturally charm the eyes, and fascinate the hearts, even of Christians, and which are wholly inconsistent with *the love of God*. By the latter they are made sensible of their own weakness, taught their dependence on God, driven to their closets and their knees, and induced to *walk humbly with God*, all their days, in the intimate and most profitable communion of faith and prayer.

*The triumphing of the wicked is short;* and *the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning*. When Christians are *redeemed from the power of the grave*, they shall see all these enemies retiring behind them, and speedily vanishing, with the flight of ages, to a distance, immeasurable by the power of the imagination. All around them will then be friends. God will then be their Father; Angels their brethren; happiness their portion; and heaven their everlasting home.

2dly. *In the exercise of this authority, he bestows on them all good, temporal and eternal.*

Of temporal good he gives them all that is necessary, or useful, for such beings, in such a state. The world may be, and often is, a vale of tears; and life a solitary pilgrimage through *a weary land*. Poverty may betide, afflictions befall, diseases arrest, and death, at what they may think an untimely period, summon them away. By enemies they may be surrounded, and by friends forsaken. They may be exposed to hatred, contumely, and persecution. Their days may be overcast with gloom, and their nights with sorrow. But He has assured them, and they will find the assurance verified, that these are *light afflictions* which only *work for them an eternal weight of glory;* and that these, as truly as all other, things *work together for their good*. Even these, therefore, however forbidding their aspect, will be found to be good for *them;* good upon the whole; good in such a sense, as to render their whole destiny brighter, better, and more happy.

In the mean time, he furnishes them also, and furnishes them abundantly, with spiritual good. He furnishes them with the sanctification of the soul. He gives them light, to discover their own duty, and his glory, and excellency. He gives them strength, to resist temptations; sorrow for their sins; patience, resignation, and fortitude, under afflictions; faith to confide in him, and to *overcome the* world; hope, to encourage their efforts, and to fix them firmly in their obedience; peace, to hush the tumults of the mind, and to shed a cheerful serenity over all its affections; and joy, to assure them of his glorious presence, and to anticipate in their thoughts the everlasting joy of his immortal kingdom.

In the future world, when *death shall have been swallowed up in victory*, and *all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes*, he will begin to bestow upon them eternal good. In this *fulness of joy*, every thing will be only delightful. Their bodies, *raised* from the

grave *in incorruption, power, and glory*, will be *spiritual, immortal*, ever vigorous, and ever young. Their souls, purified from every stain, and luminous with knowledge and virtue, will be images of his own amiableness and consummate beauty. Their stations, allotments, and employment, will be such, as become those who are *Kings, and Priests*, in the heavenly world. Their companions will be Cherubim and Seraphim; and their home will be the house of their Father, and their God.

At the same time, in bestowing all this good he himself is the dispenser, and the good dispensed. *I*, says Christ, *am the light of the world. The city*, saith St. *John, had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the* LAMB *is the light thereof.* In other words, Christ is the medium, through which all the knowledge of God is conveyed to the intelligent Universe, his character discovered, and his pleasure made known. Of the heavenly world, particularly, he is here expressly declared to be *the light: The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* The Lamb is this *glory of God*, which is said to be *the light of heaven.* Christ is not only the dispenser of the good enjoyed in heaven, but the very good, which is dispensed; not only the dispenser of knowledge, but the thing known; not only the communicator of enjoyment, but the thing enjoyed; the person divinely seen, loved, worshipped, and praised, for ever. In his presence, all his followers, and all their happy companions, *with open face beholding in him, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, will be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

## REMARKS.

From these observations may in the

1st place, *Be conclusively argued the Divinity of Christ.*

From the text, and the comments here given on it, it is evident, that Christ holds the sceptre of the Universe, and rules the great Kingdom of Jehovah. Let me ask, Who, but the infinitely perfect One, can possibly hold such a sceptre, or control, successfully, or even at all, such an empire? Unless he be *every where present*, how can he every where act, rule, and bring to pass such events, as he chooses; such as are necessary to the divine glory, and the universal good? Unless thus present, acting, and ruling, how can he prevent the existence of such things, as will be injurious to this good; or fail to be disappointed of his own purposes, and, ultimately, of the supreme end of all his labours? How evident is it, even to our view, that inanimate things must cease to operate, and to move in their destined course; that animated beings must wander out of it; and that rational beings must, if virtuous, go astray, from the defectiveness of their imperfect nature, and, if sinful, from malignity and design. The evil designs of the latter, particularly, must, if he be not present, multiply in their numbers, and increase

in their strength, until various parts of this immense Kingdom become disordered, and perhaps destroyed. What an impression would it make on the feelings, what a change in the affairs, of this world, if mankind, if evil Spirits, were to know, that the Ruler of all things would be absent from it, even a single year! What courage would sinners gather! With what strength, and to what a multitude, would sins accumulate! What a tempest of violence would ravage this globe! To what a mountainous height would be heaped up the mass of human misery!

Nor is *his absolute knowledge of all things* less indispensable, than his universal presence. This knowledge is completely necessary, to enable him to discern *the ends*, deserving of his pursuit, and the *proper means* of their accomplishment. When all these are resolved on, the same knowledge, only, can direct the operations of these means; prevent their disorder, or their failure; preclude successful opposition; and avoid the consequent confusion, disturbance, and disappointment. Especially is this knowledge indispensable to the efficacious government of rational, or moral, agents. *The powers* of these agents are *thought, volition, and motivity:* all invisible to every eye, except the Omniscient; and, if discovered at all, before their operations exist, discovered by that eye only. But these agents are beyond measure the most important instruments of the divine designs, in this great kingdom; and, if not prevented, the most able to disturb its order and happiness. It is plain therefore, that he, who rules the Universe, must, in order to prevent the disturbance of this Kingdom, *understand the thoughts afar off;* or, as in the translation formerly in use, *long before* they are formed.

By the same knowledge, only, is the same exalted Person qualified to be the final Judge, and Rewarder, of the Universe. A great part of the sin and holiness, of such beings, and of the enhancements and diminutions of both, lies altogether in their thoughts and volitions. To judge his creatures justly, then, it is absolutely necessary, that he should *search the heart and try the reins*, of every Rational being.

With the same knowledge, only, can he determine, apportion, and execute, the unnumbered allotments of Intelligent creatures. These, united, form an immense and eternal system of providence; compared with which, the providence, exercised in this world, is but a point: and this vast system must, indispensably, be contrived aright, and without any defect, from the beginning. The parts, of which it will be composed, will be literally infinite; and can be devised only by an Infinite Mind.

Nor is *Omnipotence* less necessary for all these vast and innumerable purposes, than *Omniscience, and Omnipresence.* No power, inferior to omnipotence, could produce, or hold together, so many beings; or carry on to completion so many and so various purposes. To the power, actually exerted for these ends, every

being must be completely subjected; and all created power entirely subordinate. An absolute and irresistible dominion must be exercised, unceasingly, over every part of his Kingdom; or the great designs of creation and providence must be in continual danger of being finally frustrated.

Equally necessary is *infinite Rectitude* for the just, benevolent, and perfect administration of such a government. The least defect, the least wrong, would here be fatal. From the decision there can be no appeal; from the arm of execution there can be no escape. A creature, if wronged here, is wronged hopelessly, and for ever. The Ruling Mind must, therefore, be subject to no weakness, passion, or partiality. Without perfect rectitude there can be no ultimate confidence; and, without such confidence, voluntary, or virtuous, obedience cannot exist.

Thus, when Christ is *exalted to be head over all things*, and constituted the Ruler, Judge, and Rewarder, of the Universe; he is plainly exalted to a station and character demanding infinite attributes; perfections literally divine. Either, then, he possesses these attributes; or he has been exalted to a station, which, so far as reason can discern, he is unqualified to fill. But he was exalted to this station by unerring and boundless Wisdom. Of course, he certainly possesses all the qualifications, which it can demand. In other words, he is a Person literally divine.

2dly. *From the same observations we may discern how greatly* WE *need such a friend, as Christ.*

That we are creatures wholly dependent, frail, ignorant, exposed, and unable to protect ourselves or provide for our interests, needs neither proof nor illustration. To us, futurity is all blank. Between our present existence, and the approaching vast of being, hangs a dark and impenetrable cloud. What is beyond it no human eye is able to discern, and no human foresight to conjecture. There, however, all our great concerns lie; and are every moment increasing in their number and importance. There we shall enjoy the exquisite emotions, and the high dignity, of immortal virtue; the pure pleasures of a serene, self-approving mind; the eternal interchange of esteem and affection with the *general assembly of the first-born;* and the uninterrupted favour of God in the world of joy: or we shall suffer the unceasing anguish of a guilty, self-ruined soul; the malignity of evil men and evil Angels; and the wrath of our offended Creator, in the regions of wo. Between these infinitely distant allotments there is no medium; no intervening state, to which those, who fail of final approbation, can betake themselves for refuge. When, therefore, we bid adieu to this world, we shall meet with events, whose importance nothing but Omniscience can estimate; to us utterly uncertain, and utterly beyond our power.

Nay, the present moment, and every moment when present, is fraught with consequences, incapable of being estimated by any

finite understanding. On time, Eternity hangs. As we live here, we shall live hereafter. If our time be well employed, and our talents well used, it will be well with us in the end. But if we abuse both here, it will be ill with us hereafter. The present moment is important, chiefly, as it affects those which are future; begins, or strengthens, an evil or virtuous habit; depraves, or amends, the soul; hardens, or softens the heart; and contributes in this way to advance us towards heaven, or towards hell. There is no man, who is not better or worse to-day, by means of what he thought, designed, or did, yesterday. The present day, therefore, is not only important in itself, as a season, for which we must give an account; but because of the influence, which it will have on the events of the morrow. Thus circumstanced, frail, irresolute, wandering, wicked, exposed to immense dangers, and yet capable of immense enjoyments; how infinitely desirable is it, that we should have such a friend, as Christ. In his mind are treasured up all the means of happiness, which we need; the immense power, knowledge, and goodness, the unchangeable truth, faithfulness, and mercy, which, and which only, can provide, and secure, for us immortal blessings, or preserve us from evils, which know no end. In all places he is present; over all things he rules with an irresistible dominion. No being, no event, can be hidden from his eye. No enemy, however insidious, or however powerful, can escape from his hand. His disposition is written in letters of blood on the cross. He who died, that sinners might live; he who prayed for his murderers, while imbruing their hands in his blood; can need, can add, no proofs of his compassion for men. This glorious Redeemer is, also, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* Such a friend to man, as he was when he hung on the cross, he will be throughout eternity; and to every one, who sincerely desires an interest in his good-will, he will manifest his friendship in an endless succession of blessings.

While we wander through the wilderness of life, amid so many wants; how desirable must it be to find a friend, able and willing, to furnish the needed supplies! Amid so many enemies and dangers, how desirable must it be to find a friend, able and willing to furnish the necessary protection! Amid so many temptations, to watch over us; amid so many sorrows, to relieve us; in solitude, to be our companion; in difficulties, our helper; in despondence, our support; in disease, our physician; in death, our hope, resurrection, and life! In a word, how desirable must it be to find a friend, who, throughout all the strange, discouraging state of the present life, will give us peace, consolation, and joy; and cause all things, even the most untoward and perplexing, to *work together for our good!*

On a dying bed especially, when *our flesh* and *our hearts* must *fail*, of course; our earthly friends yield us little consolation, and no hope; and the world itself retire from our view; how delight-

ful will such a friend be! Then the soul, uncertain, alone, hovering over the form, which it has so long inhabited, and stretching its wings for its flight into the unknown vast, will sigh, and pant, for an arm, on which it may lean, and a bosom, on which it may safely recline. But there, Christ is present with all his tenderness and all his power. With one hand he holds the anchor of hope; and with the other he points the way to heaven.

In the final resurrection, when the Universe shall rend asunder, and the elements of this great world shall rush together with immense confusion and ruin, how supporting, how ravishing, will it be, when we awake from our final sleep, and ascend from the dust in which our bodies have been so long buried, to find this glorious Redeemer *re-fashioning our vile bodies like unto his glorious body*, and re-uniting them to our minds, purified and immortal! With what emotions shall we arise, and stand, and behold the Judge descend *in the glory of his Father, with all his holy Angels!* With what emotions shall we see the same unchangeable and everlasting friend placing us on his right hand in glory and honour, which kings will covet in vain, and before which all earthly grandeur shall be forgotten! With what melody will the voice of the Redeemer burst on our ears, when he proclaims, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world!* How will the soul distend with transport, when, accompanied by *the Church of the first-born*, and surrounded by *Thrones, Principalities, and Powers*, it shall begin its flight towards the highest heavens, to meet *his Father and our Father, his God and our God!* What an internal heaven will dawn in the mind, when we shall be presented before the throne of Jehovah, and settled amid our own brethren in our immortal inheritance, and our final home; and behold all our sins washed away, our trials ended, our dangers escaped, our sorrows left behind us, and our reward begun, in that world, where all things are ever new, delightful, and divine!

At these solemn and amazing seasons, how differently will those unhappy beings feel, who on a death-bed find no such friend; who rise to the resurrection of damnation; who are left behind, when the righteous ascend to meet their Redeemer; who are placed on the left hand at the final trial; and to whom, in the most awful language which was ever heard in the Universe, he will say, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels!*

# SERMON LX.

## MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

Acts. ii. 22.—*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.*

In a series of discourses, I have considered, at length, the *character of Christ, as a Prophet, Priest, and King.* I shall now proceed to investigate his character as a *Worker of Miracles.*

In the text, Christ is styled *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among the Jews.* This approbation is declared to have been testified *by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst* of that People: and of all this, it is asserted, the Jews themselves had been witnesses. These subjects I propose to consider in the following discourse, so far as I shall judge necessary to my general design. I shall, however, neglect the order of the text; and adopt one, more suited to the present purpose.

I. *I shall define a Miracle:*

II. *Shall show that Christ Wrought Miracles:* and

III. *Shall point out their Importance.*

I. *I shall define a Miracle.*

*A miracle is a suspension, or counteraction, of what are called the Laws of Nature.* By the laws of nature I intend *those regular courses of Divine agency, which we discern in the world around us.* God, to enable us to understand his works, and his character as displayed in them, and to enable us, also, to direct, with success, our own conduct in the various duties of life, and probably for other purposes, has been pleased to conform his own agency to certain rules, formed by his wisdom; called by Philosophers, *Laws of nature;* and in the Scriptures, *Ordinances of Heaven.* To these laws all things, with which we are acquainted by experience, are usually conformed. A miracle, is either a *suspension*, or *counteraction*, of these laws; or, more definitely, of the progress of things according to these laws. I have chosen both these words, because I would include all possible miracles; and because some events of this kind may more obviously seem to be suspensions, and others counteractions, of these laws.

II. *I shall show, that Christ wrought miracles.*

In this case, I shall, for the present, assume the story as true, which is told us by the Evangelists concerning the works of Christ; and refer my observations on this subject to another part of the discussion. Taking it, then, for granted, that Christ really did the

things, ascribed to him in the Gospel; I assert, that a considerable number of these things were real miracles. I say a considerable number, because it would be idle to extend the debate, on the present occasion, to any thing, supposed to be of a dubious nature; and because, after every deduction which can be asked, a sufficient number will remain to satisfy every wish of a Christian, and to overthrow every cavil of an Infidel. Among other examples of this nature, I select the following.

*The case of the man, who was born blind*: who observed justly concerning it, *Since the world began, it was not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.* No arguments are necessary to prove this to have been a miracle in the perfect sense; for every individual knows, that it is a total counteraction of the laws of nature, that clay, made of spittle and earth, and smeared upon the eyes, should restore sight to a person born blind. I select this case the rather, because it was formally examined by the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, and evinced to have been real, beyond every doubt.

*The case of Christ's walking upon the water in the lake of Gennesaret*, is another, equally unexceptionable.

*The cures, which he wrought on lepers by his mere word and pleasure;* cures, which no other person has been able to perform by any means whatever; are instances of the same nature. Of the same nature, also, are *those cases, in which he raised the dead to life;* viz. the daughter of *Jairus*, the son of the widow of *Nain*, and *Lazarus*. That these persons were all really dead, there is not the least room to doubt: that they were all raised to life, is certain.

I shall only add two instances more: *one, in which he fed four, and the other, in which he fed five, thousand men, besides women and children, with a few loaves of barley bread, and a few little fishes.* In this miracle *creating power* was immediately exerted, with a degree of evidence which nothing could resist, or rationally question.

That all these were miracles, according to the definition, given above, must, I think, be acknowledged without hesitation. Arguments to prove this point, therefore, would be superfluous.

That these facts really took place, and that the narration, which conveys the knowledge of them to us, is true, has been so often, so clearly, and so unanswerably proved, that to attempt to argue this point here would seem a supererogatory labour. All of you have, or easily can have, access to a numerous train of books, containing this proof, elucidated with high advantage. I shall, therefore, consider this subject in a manner extremely summary, and calculated to exhibit little more than a mere synopsis of evidence, pertaining to the subject. For this end I observe,

1st. *The facts were of such a nature, as to be obvious, in the plainest manner, to the senses, and understanding, of all men, possessed of common sense.*

2dly. *The narrators were eye and ear-witnesses of them.*

3dly. *They were performed in the most public manner;* in the presence of multitudes, the greater part of whom were opposers of Christ.

4thly. *They were generally believed,* so generally, as to induce, customarily, the friends of the sick and distressed, wherever Christ came, to apply to him, with absolute confidence in his ability to relieve them: a fact, which proves the universal conviction of the Jewish people, at that time, that Christ certainly and continually wrought miracles. But this conviction could not have existed, to any considerable extent, unless he had actually wrought miracles.

5thly. *The Apostles had no possible interest to deceive their fellow-men.* They neither gained, could gain, nor attempted to gain, any advantage in the present world by publishing this story. On the contrary, they suffered, through life, the loss of all things, while declaring it, and the religion, of which it was the foundation, to mankind. In the future world, as Jews, believing the Old Testament to be the word of God, they could expect nothing, but perdition, as the reward of their useless imposture.

6thly. *They were men, whose integrity has not only been unimpeached, but is singular.* This is evinced by the fact, that innumerable multitudes of their countrymen, and of many other nations, embraced the religion which they taught; committed to their guidance their souls, and their everlasting interests; hazarded, and yielded, all that they held dear in this world, for the sake of this religion; and still esteemed these very men, through whose instrumentality they had been brought into these distresses, the very best of mankind. It is also proved by the further fact; that, in the ages immediately succeeding, as well as in those which have followed, their character has, in this respect, stood higher, than that of any other men whatever.

7thly. *Their Narratives wear more marks of veracity, than any other which the world can furnish.*

8thly. *The Existence of these miracles is acknowledged by Jews, and Heathen, as well as Christians; and was wholly uncontradicted by either for fifteen hundred years.*

9thly. *These Narratives were the genuine productions of those, to whom they are ascribed.* That they were written by these persons is unanswerably proved by the testimony of their cotemporaries, and very early followers. That they have come down to us uncorrupted, and unmutilated, is certain, from the age, and coincidence, of numerous Manuscripts; from the Versions early made of them into various languages; from the almost innumerable Quotations from them, found in other books, still extant; from the joint Consent of orthodox Christians and heretics; from the Impossibility of corrupting them with success, because of the frequency, and constancy, with which they were read in public and

in private; because of the numerous copies, very early diffused throughout all Christian countries; because of the profound religious veneration, with which they were regarded; and because of the eagle-eyed watchfulness, with which contending sects guarded every passage, which furnished any inducement to corruption, or mutilation.

No other history can boast of these, or one half of these, powerful proofs of its genuineness and authenticity. If, then, we do not admit these narratives to be true, we must bid a final farewell to the admission of all historical testimony.

Mr. *Hume* has written an Essay, to disprove the existence of the miracles recorded in the Gospel. In the introduction to this Essay, he says, "*he flatters himself, he has discovered an argument, which will prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion.*" When this Essay first appeared, it was received with universal triumph by Infidels, and with no small degree of alarm by timorous Christians. Since that time, however, it has been repeatedly answered; and triumphantly refuted by Dr. *Campbell;* and completely exposed, as a mere mass of sophistry; ingenious indeed, but shamefully disingenuous; and utterly destitute of solid argument, and real evidence.

After such ample refutation, it would be a useless employment for me to enter upon a formal examination of the scheme, contained in this Essay. I shall, therefore, dismiss it with a few observations.

The great doctrine of Mr. *Hume* is this: "*That, according to the experience of man, all things uniformly exist agreeably to the laws of nature, that every instance of our experience is not only an evidence, that the thing, experienced, exists in the manner which we perceive, but that all the following events of the same kind will also exist in the same manner. This evidence he considers, also, as increased by every succeeding instance of the same experience.* According to his scheme, therefore, the evidence, that any thing, which we perceive by our senses, now exists, is made up of the present testimony of our senses, united with all former testimonies, of the same nature, to facts of the same kind. The existence of any fact, therefore, instead of being completely proved, is only partially proved, by the present testimony of our senses to its existence. According to this scheme, therefore, *we*, who are present in this house, know, that ourselves and others are present, partly by seeing each other present at this time, and partly by remembering that we have been present heretofore. Of course, the first time we were thus present, we had not the same assurance of this fact, as the second time. This assurance became still greater the third time; greater still the fourth; and thus has gone on accumulating strength in every succeeding instance. Every person, therefore, who has been here one hundred times, has an hundred times the evidence, that he is now here, which he had, when he

was here the first time, that he was then present: and I, who, during twenty-four years, have been present many thousand times, know, that I am now here, with a thousand degrees of evidence, more than is possessed, concerning the like fact, by any other person who is present. A scheme of reasoning, which conducts to such a manifest and gross absurdity, must, one would think, have been seen to be false by a man, much less sagacious than Mr. *Hume*.

Every man of common sense knows, and cannot avoid knowing, even at a glance, that *all the evidence which we possess, or can possess, of the existence of any fact, is furnished by the present testimony of our senses to that fact.* Of course, every such man knows equally well, that no testimony of the senses to any preceding fact can affect a present fact in any manner whatever. The person, who is now present in this house for the first time, has all the evidence, that he is here, which is possessed by *him*, who has been here a thousand times before. The evidence of the senses to any single fact is all the evidence, of which that fact is ever capable. Nor can it be increased, even in the minutest degree, by the same evidence, repeated concerning similar facts, existing, afterwards, in any supposable number of instances. He, who has crossed a ferry safely, never thought of crossing it a second time, in order to know whether he was safe, or not.

The influence, which Experience is intended by Mr. *Hume* to have on our belief of the existence of future events, is of the same nature. Past experience is, by his scheme, the great criterion for determining on all that which is to come. An event, which has already been witnessed a thousand times, is, in his view, to be expected again, with a confidence, exactly proportioned to this number. If an event, on the contrary, has not taken place, it is not to be at all expected; but regarded as incredible. Thus, if a ferry-boat has crossed the ferry a thousand times without sinking, the probability is, as one thousand to nothing, that it will never sink hereafter.

The Analogy, here referred to, is founded on the general maxim: that *the same Causes produce, in the same circumstances, the same effects.* The instances, in which causes and circumstances, *apparently the same*, are *really such*, are so few, that, in the actual state of things, it can answer Mr. Hume's purpose in a very small number of cases only. Almost always the causes themselves, or the circumstances in which they operate, are, in this mutable world, so continually changed, that analogies, founded on this maxim, are rarely exact; and are, therefore, rarely safe rules for forming conclusions. All men are so sensible of this truth, that they easily, and uniformly, admit testimony, as a sufficient proof of the fallacy of such conclusions. The smallest credible testimony will induce any man to believe, that a ferry-boat has sunk; although it may before have crossed safely, and regularly, for many years. Much

more do we always admit beforehand, that almost all events may come to pass, contrary in their nature and appearance to those, which have already happened.

Mr. *Hume* exhibits to me a full conviction in his own mind, that his scheme was unsound, by the recourse which he was obliged to have to the disingenuous arts of controversy. Thus he at first uses the word *Experience*, which is all-important to this controversy, to denote, what alone it truly denotes, *the actual evidence of a Man's own senses*. In the progress of his Essay, he soon diverts it into a sense, entirely different; and means by it *the experience of all who have preceded us*. But of their experience we know nothing, except by Testimony; the very thing, to which Mr. *Hume* professedly opposes what he calls Experience. On this *Testimony*, styled by him *Experience*, he founds an argument, upon which he places great reliance, to overthrow the evidence of the same testimony. Thus he declares Miracles to be contrary to all Experience; meaning by it the experience of all mankind; when he knew, that a part of mankind had testified, that they in their own experience had been witnesses of miracles; for this testimony was the very thing, against which he wrote his Essay.

*Miracles* he defines to be *Violations and transgressions of the laws of Nature*. These words, being regularly used to denote oppositions of moral beings to moral laws, and involving, naturally, the idea of turpitude, or wrong, were, I presume, used, to attach to miracles an idea of some variation from that perfect moral conduct, which we attribute to God.

*Miracles*, he also says, *are* CONTRARY *to our experience*. In this declaration he is unhappy. They may be truly said to be *aside from our Experience;* but are in no sense contrary to it. All that can be said is, that *we have not witnessed miracles*. No man can say, that he has experienced any thing contrary to them.

Having made these observations, I proceed to examine Mr. *Hume's* capital doctrine, *that Testimony cannot evince the reality of a miracle*. His argument is this: The evidence, that any thing exists in any given case, is exactly proportioned to the number of instances, in which it is known to have happened before. If then an event have happened a thousand times, and the contrary event should afterward happen once; then there are one thousand degrees of evidence against the existence of this contrary event, and but one in its favour. We are, therefore, compelled, by a balance of nine hundred and ninety-nine degrees of evidence against nothing, to believe, that this event has not taken place. We are here, as Mr. *Hume* teaches, to weigh experience against experience, and to be governed in our decision by the preponderating weight. In this manner he determines, that our experience has, in the number of instances, furnished such a vast preponderation of evidence against the existence of a miracle, that if we were to witness it, we could not rationally believe it to have existed, until it had taken

place as many times, and some more, than what he calls the contrary event. For example: if we have known a thousand deceased persons to have been buried, and none of them to have been raised from the grave; we cannot rationally believe a man to have been raised from the grave, although we saw him rise; conversed with him; and lived with him ever so many years afterwards. Before we begin to believe, that a person was raised from the dead, we must have seen, at least, one more person thus raised, than the whole number who have been buried, and have not risen. Then, and not till then, we shall become possessed of one degree of evidence, that a person has been raised from the dead: the whole influence of all the preceding resurrections being to diminish, successively, the previously existing evidence against the fact, that a person has been raised from the dead. Our own experience of the existence of a miracle is, thus, not to be admitted, as a proof of its existence. But as testimony is founded on experience, and is evidence of a less certain nature; it is clear, that what experience cannot prove can never be evinced by testimony.

This reasoning has a grave and specious appearance, but is plainly destitute of all solidity. Every man knows by his own experience, that the repetition of an event contributes nothing to the proof, or certainty, of its existence. The proof of the existence of any event lies wholly in the testimony of our senses. When the event is, as we customarily say, repeated; that is, when another similar event takes place, our senses in the same manner prove to us the existence of this event. But the evidence, which they give us of the second, has no retrospective influence on the first; as the evidence, given of the first, has no influence on the second. In each instance the evidence is complete; nor can it be affected by any thing, which may precede it, or succeed it. What is once seen, and known, is as perfectly seen, and known, as it can be; and in the only manner, in which it can be ever seen, and known. If we were to see a man raised from the grave, we should know, that he was thus raised, as perfectly as it could be known by us; nor would it make the least difference in the evidence, or certainty, of this fact, whether thousands, or none, were raised afterwards.

In perfect accordance with these observations has been the conduct of mankind in every age, and country. No tribunal of justice ever asked the question, whether a crime had been *twice committed* in order to determine with the more certainty, and better evidence, that it had been *committed once*. No evidence of this nature, before any such tribunal, was ever adduced, or considered as proper to be adduced, to evince the existence of any fact, or to disprove its existence. No individual ever thought of recurring to the testimony of his senses on a former occasion, to strengthen their evidence on a present occasion.

*The man born blind*, (to apply this scheme directly to miracles) could not possibly feel the necessity, or advantage, of inquiring whether he had been restored to sight before, in order to determine, that he had received it from the hands of Christ; or of asking the question, whether he *saw*, at any time before, to prove that he saw now. The *leper*, who acquired his health by the command of Christ, was as perfectly conscious of his restoration, as if he had been restored on twenty former occasions. All around him, also, when they saw the scales fall off with which he had been incrusted, and the bloom of health return; when they beheld his activity renewed, and all the proofs of soundness exhibited to their eyes; perceived the cure as perfectly, as if they had been witnesses of one hundred preceding cures, of the same nature.

What is true of these, is equally true of all similar cases. Experience, therefore, is capable of completely proving the existence of a miracle.

What we experience we can declare; and declare exactly as it has happened. Were this always done, testimony would have exactly the same strength of evidence, which experience is admitted to possess. It is not, however, always done. Errors, both intentional and unintentional, and those very numerous, accompany the declarations of men. Still the weight of testimony is very great; so great, that the conduct of almost all the important concerns of mankind is regulated entirely, as well as rationally, by the evidence which it contains. Should twelve men, known and proved to possess the uniform character of unimpeachable veracity, declare to one of us, independently, (no one of them being acquainted with the fact, that any other had made the same declaration) that they had seen, in the midst of a public assembly, a *leper* cleansed, and the white loathsome crust of the leprosy fall off, and the bloom and vigour of health return, at the command of a person, publicly believed to have wrought hundreds of such miracles, and to be distinguished from all men by unexampled wisdom and holiness, every one of us would believe the testimony to be true. Especially should we receive their testimony, if we saw these very men endued with new and wonderful wisdom and holiness, professedly derived from the same person; forsaking a religion for which they had felt a bigoted attachment; embracing, and teaching a religion wholly new; and in confirmation of this new religion, professedly taught by God himself, working many miracles; forsaking all earthly enjoyments; voluntarily undergoing all earthly distresses; and finally yielding their lives to a violent death. A miracle, therefore, can be proved by testimony.

I have already pursued this subject farther than I intended in this discourse. Some other considerations, relative to it, I shall probably mention hereafter. At the present time, I will only remark further, that Mr. *Hume*, confidently, but erroneously, supposes a presumption to lie strongly against the existence of mira-

cles. The presumption is wholly in favour of their existence. We know, that innumerable miracles have taken place. The *Creation of the world* is one immense complication of miraculous works; and *the first beings of every sort* were miraculous existences. As miracles were wrought here; so the analogy of the Divine works, as well as the uniformity of the Divine character, irresistibly compels us to believe, that they will be wrought, wherever a sufficient occasion is presented. The illumination and reformation of mankind is a cause of this nature, existing in the highest degree. That God should work miracles to prove the truth, and spread the influence of Christianity, is, therefore, with the highest reason to be expected; especially as miracles are the most proper, as well as most forcible, of all proofs, that a religion is derived from Him.

III. *I shall now attempt to point out the Importance of miracles.*

1st. *The importance of the miracles of Christ is manifest in the immediate benefit of those, for whom they were wrought.*

All the miracles of Christ were glorious acts of *beneficence*. In his own words, *The blind received their sight, and the lame walked; the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard; the dead were raised up, and the poor had the Gospel preached to them.* That acts of this general nature were of high importance to those, for whom they were done; and that, multiplied as we are told they were, particularly by St. John, they constituted a mass of beneficence, incalculably interesting to the age and country, in which they existed; will not admit of a doubt.

2dly. *The miracles of Christ were of great importance to his character.*

They were important, *first, as proofs of power.* Christ, for the wisest and best reasons, appeared as the son of a carpenter, and lived alway in a state of general humiliation. But it was necessary also, that his character, even in this world, should be distinguished by personal greatness. This distinction nothing could so effectually produce, as the power of controlling, in this manner, the laws of nature, and suspending, or counteracting, in this manner, the agency, by which the affairs of this world are carried on. As Christ wrought miracles in his own name, he was thus proved to possess this power in himself, as an inherent energy. But how superior is this power to all that can be boasted by the greatest men who have ever lived. What conqueror would not cheerfully barter all the power, in which he glories, for the control of wounds and diseases, of winds and waves, of life and death? This power exhibited Christ, in the midst of all his humiliation, as greater than any, and than all, the children of Adam; and surrounded his character with a splendour becoming his mission. How important, how necessary this greatness was to Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, I need not illustrate.

Secondly, *The miracles of Christ were necessary, as proofs of his Benevolence.*

Benevolence is proved by action. But no actions were ever equally proofs of benevolence with the miraculous actions of Christ, except his condescension, atonement, and intercession. It would not have been possible for Christ, in any other manner, to exhibit the same character with the same strength. No actions could have been equally beneficent. The good done, was the most necessary, and the most useful, to those for whom it was done. Those for whom it was done were persons, to whom it is usually least done; who most need it; to whom it is of the highest consequence; and who, therefore, as objects of Christ's beneficence, illustrate, more clearly than any others could do, this excellence of his character. At the same time, it was beneficence accomplished by a person, possessed of stupendous power and greatness, manifested in the very communication of the good. Those, who possess great power, very rarely manifest, and therefore are justly believed very rarely to possess, an eminent degree of good-will. Intoxicated with their greatness, they are generally employed in displaying it to mankind, and in thus engrossing admiration and applause. From such persons Christ is gloriously distinguished, by employing his own unexampled power solely in communicating kindness to those around him.

In both these great particulars the miracles of Christ invest him with greatness and glory, to which there has been nothing parallel in the present world.

3dly. *The miracles of Christ are of vast importance, as proofs of the Divinity of his Mission.*

A miracle is an act of infinite power only; and is, therefore, a proof of the immediate agency of God. None, but he, can withhold, suspend, or counteract, his agency, exerted according to the laws of nature.

A miracle becomes a proof of the character, or doctrine, of him by whom it was wrought, *by being professedly wrought for the confirmation of either.* A miracle is the testimony of God. From the perfect veracity of God it irresistibly results, that he can never give, nor rationally be supposed to give, his testimony to any thing but truth. When, therefore, a miracle is wrought in confirmation of any thing, or as evidence of any thing, we know, that that thing is true, because God has given to it his testimony. The miracles of Christ were wrought, to prove, that the mission and doctrine of Christ were from God. They were, therefore, certainly from God.

To this it may be objected, *that miracles are asserted by the Scriptures themselves to have been wrought in confirmation of falsehood:* as, for example, by the *Magicians, the Witch of Endor, and by Satan in the time of Christ's temptation.*

If the *Magicians of Egypt* wrought miracles, God wrought them, with a view to make the final triumph of his own cause, in the hands of *Moses*, more the object of public attention, and more strik-

ing to the view of mankind. This was done, when the *Magicians* themselves were put to silence, and forced to confess, that the works of *Moses* were accomplished by *the finger* of God. But the truth is, the *Magicians* wrought no miracles. All that they did was to busy themselves with *their enchantments;* by which, every man now knows, that, although the weak and credulous may be deceived, miracles cannot possibly be accomplished. That this is the real amount of the history, given by *Moses*, any sober man may, I think, be completely satisfied by reading *Farmar's treatise on Miracles.*

*The Witch of Endor* neither wrought, nor expected to work, any miracle. This is clearly evident from her astonishment, and alarm, at the appearance of *Samuel. Saul*, who expected a miracle, beheld Samuel without any peculiar surprise: she, who expected *none*, with amazement and terror.

Satan is said by the Evangelists to have taken our Saviour up into *a very high mountain, and to have shewn him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* The Greek word οικεμενης, here translated *world*, very frequently signifies *land, or country;* and ought to have been thus rendered here: the meaning being no other, than that Satan showed our Saviour *the four Tetrarchies*, or *Kingdoms, comprised in the land of Judea.* In this transaction it will not be pretended, that there was any thing miraculous.

The doctrine, *that miracles have been, or may be, wrought in support of falsehood*, has been incautiously adopted by several respectable Divines; and they have taught us, that, *we are to try the evidence, furnished by the miracle, by the nature of the doctrine, which it was wrought to prove.* This, I apprehend, is infinitely dishonourable to the character of Jehovah; for it supposes, that he may not only countenance, but establish, falsehood. At the same time, it is arguing in a circle. It is employing *the doctrine to prove the miracle*, and, then, *the miracle to prove the doctrine.* That the miracles of Christ were complete proof of his doctrine is clearly evident from the words of Christ himself; when he declares concerning the Jews, that, *if he had not done among them such works, as no other man did, they had not had sin; but* that *now they had no cloak for their sin.*

# SERMON LXI.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Acts iii. 15.——*And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses.*

IN the preceding discourse, I made a number of general observations concerning the miracles of Christ. The subject, which next offers itself to our view concerning this glorious Person, is *his Resurrection*. This interesting subject I propose now to examine with particular attention. Its importance in a system of Theology can scarcely need to be illustrated.

If Christ was raised from the dead, he was certainly the Messiah; or, in other words, whatever he declared himself to be. His doctrines, precepts, and life, were all approved by God; possess Divine authority; and demand, with the obligation of that authority, the faith and obedience of mankind. To prove this fact, therefore, is to prove beyond a reasonable debate the truth of the Christian system.

At the same time, the arguments, which prove the reality of *this* miracle, lend their whole force to the *other* miracles, recorded in the Gospel. For this reason, I have reserved most of the direct arguments in behalf of miracles for the present occasion.

In the context we are informed, that *a certain man lame from his mother's womb, who was* now *more than forty years old*, and *who had been carried, and laid, daily, at the gate of the temple called Beautiful, to receive alms of them that entered into the temple*, was cured of his lameness by the command of St. *Peter*. So extraordinary an event astonished the *Jews*, assembled to worship in the temple; and collected them in great numbers around *Peter* and *John*. *Peter*, observing their astonishment, addressed to them a pertinent and very pungent discourse; in which he informed them, that the Lord Jesus Christ, *whom they had killed*, and *whom God had raised to life*, had restored this lame man to soundness and strength. This proof of christ's Messiahship he made the foundation of an earnest and persuasive exhortation to them to repent of their sins, and turn to God. The efficacy of this discourse on those, who heard it, was wonderful. About five thousand men received it with the faith of the Gospel, and were added unto the Lord.

In the text, (the hinge on which all this discourse of St. Peter turns) he declares to the *Jews* the three following things.

1st. *That they had killed the Prince of life:*

2dly. *That God had raised him from the dead:* and,

3dly. *That the Apostle himself and his companions were witnesses of this wonderful event.*

The *first* of these assertions has very rarely been doubted. I know of but a single instance, in which it has been denied in form. *Volney* has made a number of silly observations, intended to persuade the world, that Christ never existed; and that the history of him, contained in the Gospel, is a fiction, compiled, with some variations and improvements, from the *Hindoo* tales concerning the God *Creeshnoo*. I will not attempt a serious answer to such nonsense. Infidelity must be pitied, when it is driven to such fetches as this, in order to support itself, and maintain its contest with Christianity.

The second assertion has been often disputed; as, indeed, it must always be by every man, who denies the revelation of the Scriptures, or the mission of Christ. It is the design of this discourse to state the evidence concerning the great fact, here declared, with candour and fairness. It demands no other manner of statement: as will, I trust, be sufficiently evinced in the prosecution of this design. As the proof of this fact is almost all furnished by the Apostles, and their companions; the witnesses appointed by Christ himself; the evidence, alleged here, will of course be principally derived from *them*. It will be unnecessary, therefore, to make the two last assertions of St. *Peter* the subjects of distinct heads of discourse.

If the Apostles have not given us a true account concerning the resurrection of Christ, it must be,

I. *Because they were themselves deceived:* or,

II. *Because they intended to deceive others.*

For if they were not themselves deceived, but knew the truth, and have faithfully declared it in their writings; the plainest and most ignorant man cannot fail to discern, that Christ was certainly raised from the dead. That neither of these suppositions is just, I shall now attempt to prove.

I. Then, *the Apostles were not themselves deceived with regard to this fact.*

In support of this assertion I observe,

1st. *The fact is of such a nature, that they were competent judges, whether it existed, or not.*

In the nature of the case, it is just as easy to determine, whether a person, once dead, is afterwards alive, as to determine whether any man is living, who has not been dead. A familiar instance will prove the justice of this assertion. Suppose a person, who was an entire stranger to us, should come into the family, in which we live. Suppose he should reside in this family, eat and drink, sleep and wake, converse and act with them, exactly in the manner in which these things are done by us, and the rest of mankind. Suppose him, further, to enter into business in the manner of other

men; to cultivate a farm; or manage causes at the bar; or practice medicine; or assume the office of a minister, and preach, visit, advise, and comfort, as is usually done in discharging the duties of this function. Every one of us, who witnessed these things, would, beyond a doubt, know this stranger to be a living man, in the same manner, and with the same certainty, with which we know each other to be alive.

The proofs of life, in this and every other case, are *the colour, the motions, the actions*, and *the speech, of a living man.* These we discern perfectly by our senses, under the general regulation of Common sense. The proofs, thus furnished, are *complete;* and, when united, as in a living man they always are, they have never deceived, they can never deceive, any man, who has the customary use of his senses.

As these are complete proofs of the facts in question, so they are always *equally complete.* The evidence, which they contain, admits of no gradations; but is always entire; always the same; and in every supposable case perfectly satisfactory. Nor is there an instance within our experience, nor an instance in the records of history, which has impaired this evidence at all; or rendered it capable of being even remotely suspected.

Were this evidence *not entire* in every instance, considered by itself; were it capable of being suspected in the smallest degree; we should be obliged, when we met, conversed, or bargained, with each other, to settle the question, whether we were mutually living beings. The Farmer would be obliged, before he bought a piece of land of his neighbour, to settle by a formal investigation the question, whether he was about to buy it of a real man, or a phantom of the imagination. The Judge, when called upon to try a prisoner, would in the same manner be compelled, before he began the trial, to decide, whether he had brought to him for adjudication, a living being, or a spectre. The religious Assembly would be equally necessitated to examine, whether such an Assembly was really gathered, and whether a real and living preacher was in the desk; or whether what seemed to be a preacher, and a congregation, were only the phantasms of a waking dream.

As these proofs are in every instance complete; so they are *the only evidence* of the fact in question. If then they can deceive us, we are left wholly without a remedy: for we have no other possible mode of coming to the knowledge of the fact.

To the case of *the stranger*, whom I have supposed, all these proofs have obviously a perfect application. We know as well as we can possibly know, we know beyond any possible doubt, that he is a living man. But we do not, and cannot know, that he has never been dead, and afterward raised to life. To prove this, we must be supplied with totally new evidence, derived from totally other sources, than any hitherto supposed to be furnished by him. The evidence, therefore, that he is a living man, is wholly inde-

pendent of the fact, that he has, or has not, been raised from the dead; and is, by itself, absolutely complete. If, then, we should be afterwards informed, with evidence which could not be questioned, that this stranger had been actually dead, and buried, and had been afterwards raised to life: the evidence, which we had before received, that he was a living man, from the time when we first became acquainted with him, could not in the least degree be affected by the fact, that he had before been dead. The story of his death and resurrection we should undoubtedly admit, if we acted rationally, only with extreme slowness and caution, and upon decisive evidence. But no one of us would, or could, hesitate to believe the man, circumstanced as above, to be alive. Otherwise, it is plain, we could not know, that any man is alive: for all the proofs, which can attend this subject, actually attend it in the case supposed. If, therefore, the evidence can be justly doubted in one case, it can with equal propriety be doubted in all.

That the Apostles possessed all the means of judging accurately concerning the existence, and the nature, of these proofs, cannot be denied. They were possessed of the common sense, and had the usual senses, of man. No judges could be better qualified for this purpose. Had *Newton*, *Bacon*, or *Aristotle*, been employed in examining these proofs, they must have used exactly the same means of examination, which were used by *Peter* and *John*. Had they summoned Philosophy to their assistance, it could only have told them, that it had no concern with cases of this nature.

2dly. *The Apostles were unprejudiced Judges.*

In proof of this assertion I observe,

First, *That the Apostles were not Enthusiasts.*

*Enthusiasm is a persuasion, that certain religious doctrines are true, derived from a peculiar strength of imagination and feeling, relying on internal suggestions supposed to come from God, and not relying on facts, or arguments.* In the whole history, preaching, and writings, of the Apostles, there is not the least appearance of this character. According to their own accounts of themselves, (which in this case we readily believe, because, in their view, they were accounts of their defects) they were slow of belief, even to weakness and criminality. For this conduct they were often, and justly, reproved by their Master; and as we see in their writings, received his declarations with difficulty, when their evidence was complete. Nor were they finally convinced, even when uninfluenced by this sceptical spirit, except by evidence of the best kind; to wit, that of facts. These also existed before their eyes and ears, in the presence of multitudes, and enemies, who were equally convinced with themselves. Nor were they witnesses of such facts, once, twice, or a few times, only: but beheld them in an uninterrupted succession for several years. Had they not yielded to them in such circumstances, they must have been either idiots, or madmen.

*Enthusiasts also appeal to their internal suggestions, as a proof, which plainly ought, in their view, to satisfy others.* The Apostles have never made such an appeal; nor demanded belief on any other considerations, except those, which reason, in the highest exercise, perfectly approves.

*Enthusiasts always boast of the leaders, whom they professedly follow.* The Apostles, although following the most extraordinary leader ever seen in the world, have written the history of his life, without a single panegyric, and recorded the unparalleled injustice, abuse, and cruelty, which he suffered from his enemies, both in his life and death, with only a single, direct censure of those enemies, contained in these words: *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

*Enthusiasts always boast of their own excellencies, and attainments.*

The Apostles had higher reason for such boasting, than ever fell to the lot of men. They set up a new religion; and to the belief and profession of it converted a great part of mankind. They wrought, or were certainly believed to work, miracles of the most stupendous nature; rose to an influence, which Kings never possessed; and ruled more human beings, than most monarchs have been able to claim as their subjects. To this height of influence they ascended, also, from the humble employments of fishing, collecting taxes, and making tents. How few of the human race, nay, who, beside these very men, would not have become giddy in the ascent from such a lowly condition to such distinguished eminence. Yet *Matthew* records nothing of himself, except that he was a publican; that he followed Christ; and that he once entertained him at his table. *Mark and Luke* do not even mention their own names. *John* says nothing of himself by way of commendation, unless that he was *the disciple, whom Jesus loved;* and this he expresses obscurely, in the most modest manner conceivable. Indeed, the subject of self-commendation seems never to have entered their thoughts.

There is, I acknowledge, one apparent exception to this remark in the writings of the Apostles. I mean St. *Paul's* commendation of himself to the *Corinthian Church.* This, however, is prefaced with a quotation from the Old Testament as the word of God; in which it is declared, that *not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth.* He then pronounces boasting to be folly; and declares himself to be compelled to this folly by the Corinthian Church; because some of its members had denied his Apostleship: a denial, fraught with the utmost mischief to the Christian cause, and particularly in that city. The things, which he recites, are calculated in the most perfect manner to establish his character as an Apostle, and to refute the unworthy calumnies, which they had uttered against him. At the same time, they are accompanied with such proofs of ingenuousness,

truth, and modesty, as leave, irresistibly, on the mind, a stronger impression of these attributes in St. Paul, than we could have felt, if he had not written this passage. Let it be remembered, that this is the conduct of a person, who had converted half the civilized world.

In the mean time, the Apostles, in the most frank, artless, and faithful manner possible, do that, which Enthusiasts never do at all: that is, they record their own mistakes, follies, and faults; and those of very serious magnitude; acknowledged to be such by themselves, and severely censured as such by their Master. No example of this nature can be found in the whole history of Enthusiasm; and no other *such* example in the whole history of man. Enthusiasm is always a proud, vain, boasting spirit; founded in the belief, that the Enthusiast is the subject of immediate and extraordinary communications from heaven, and, therefore, designated by God as his peculiar favourite; raised of course above the human level; and irresistibly prompted to publish, on every occasion, this peculiar testimony of heaven to its pre-eminent worth; and to unfold to the view of all around it a distinction too flattering to be concealed.

Enthusiasts, also, in all their preaching and conversation on religious subjects, pour out, with eagerness, the dictates of passion and imagination; and never attempt to avail themselves of the facts, or arguments, on which reason delights to rest. Strong pictures, vehement effusions of passion, violent exclamations, loudly vociferated, and imperiously enjoined as objects of implicit faith and obedience, constitute the substance, and the sum, of their addresses to mankind. They themselves believe, because they believe; and know, because they know. Their conviction, instead of being, as it ought to be, the result of evidence, is the result of feeling merely. If you attempt to persuade them, that they are in an error, by reasoning, facts, and proofs; they regard you with a mixture of pity and contempt, for weakly opposing your twilight probabilities to their noon-day certainty, and for preposterously labouring to illumine the sun with a taper.

How contrary is all this to the conduct of the Apostles! When a proof of *their* mission, or doctrine, was demanded of them; they appealed instantly, and invariably, to arguments, facts, and miracles. These convinced mankind *then;* and produce the same conviction *now*. The lapse of seventeen centuries has detected in them no error, and in no degree enfeebled their strength. Their discourses were then, and are now, the most rational, noble, and satisfactory discourses on moral and religious subjects, ever witnessed by mankind. There is not an instance in them all, in which belief is demanded on any other grounds, than these; and on these grounds it is always rightfully demanded. But on these grounds it is never demanded by Enthusiasts. There is not in the world a stronger contrast to the preaching of Enthusiasts, than that of Christ and his Apostles.

Secondly, *The Apostles were unprejudiced Judges of this fact, because every thing, respecting it, contradicted their favourite prejudices.*

In common with their countrymen, they expected a conquering, reigning, glorious Messiah; who was to subdue, and control, all the nations of men. With him, also, they themselves expected to conquer, and reign, together with the rest of the *Jews*, as princes and nobles in the splendid earthly court of this temporal Messiah. No expectation ever flattered the predominant passions of man so powerfully, as this. It was the source of almost all their follies, and faults; and, in spite of Christ's instructions, and their piety, it broke out on every occasion, and clung to them with immoveable adherence, till the day of *Pentecost*. For, just at the moment of Christ's ascension, ten days only before that festival, they asked him, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*

They did not, and could not, believe that he would die. After he had predicted his death at five, or six, different times, in as plain language as can be used, St. *John* informs us, *that they understood not that saying, and that it was hidden from them. Peter* also, when Christ had uttered a prediction of this nature, understanding the meaning of the prediction, took upon himself the office of rebuking his Master; and said, *Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.*

Nor do they appear to have believed, that he would live again. They plainly disbelieved all the testimonies of his resurrection, except that of their own eyes and ears; and regarded the accounts of their companions, whom on all other occasions they esteemed persons of unstained veracity, *as idle tales*. It may seem strange, that, believing, as they did, implicitly, the declarations, and Messiahship, of their Master, they should not believe, that he would rise again, after his various prophecies concerning that event. But we are to remember, that his death had violated all their prejudices, blasted all their fond hopes, and buried them in gloom and despondency. The *Jews* customarily, whenever passages of scripture admitted of no interpretation accordant with their established opinions, resolved the difficulty, or rather removed it, by pronouncing the passage to be *mysterious*. The Apostles in all probability had recourse to the same expedient, to reconcile the predictions of Christ with that train of facts, whose future existence they believed; and chose rather not to understand the true import of his predictions, plain as it was, than to admit an interpretation of them, which opposed all their riveted opinions. At the same time, melancholy as were their circumstances, and their feelings, they were ill fitted for the business of commenting on the predictions of Christ; and seem not to have made even an attempt to gain the conviction, which would so effectually have relieved their distresses. When, therefore, they had evidence of his resurrection, sufficient to convince any reasonable person, they still

disbelieved; and were hardly brought to admit the testimony of their own eyes and ears. After various reports of his resurrection from those who had seen him; reports so satisfactory, that Christ himself afterward *upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart, because they had not believed them, who had seen him after he was risen; Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. He then said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands, and my feet; that it is I myself. Handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.* You are to remember, that *the print of the nails*, by which he was fastened to the cross, was still perfectly visible, both in his hands and feet. These were, therefore, appealed to by Christ, because they thus furnished evidence, *that it was he himself*, which no man would counterfeit. Still *they believed not, for joy, and wondered.* To remove this doubt, which, like most that preceded it, was the result of feeling, and not of judgment, he further said to them, *Have ye here any meat?* In answer to this inquiry, *they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. And he took it, and did eat before them.* At the end of this process only, did they entirely believe, that he was risen from the dead.

From this story, written after they had all in the fullest manner realized his resurrection, and, therefore, intended severely to censure their own unbelief; from this story, written in a manner so perfectly artless and natural, and with circumstances of such nice discrimination, as the writer could not have invented; and on both these accounts carrying with it the clearest evidence of its truth; we have the strongest proof, that the Apostles were *slow of heart to believe* the resurrection of Christ. Their assent was reluctant and gradual: such as is always yielded to evidence, which contradicts prejudices strongly imbibed.

I have observed that the story of St. *Luke* is written in a manner perfectly artless and natural, and with circumstances of such nice discrimination, as the writer could not have devised. It is extremely natural to the human mind, in a state of despondency, either not to believe at all, or to believe with extreme difficulty, those things which would remove its despondency. The good, in question, seems too great to be realized, and therefore too improbable even to be hoped. The Apostles for this reason disbelieved at first; and for the same reason continued their disbelief, after Christ stood in the midst of them, and discovered himself to their eyes and ears. A strong and mixed emotion of pleasure and surprise partially overwhelmed their reason, and prolonged their doubts, in spite of the clearest evidence. Never was the nature of man exhibited with more exactness, or with nicer discrimination, than

in this remarkable declaration: *They believed not for joy, and wondered.*

From these observations it is, if I mistake not, unanswerably evident, that the prejudices of the Apostles were all directed against the resurrection of Christ; and that they were not inclined to admit this fact by any bias in its favour.

3dly. *The Apostles had sufficient means, and opportunities, of judging whether Christ was raised from the dead.*

*He appeared* to some or other of them, or their companions, *eleven times*, distinctly recorded in the Scriptures. He appeared to *Mary Magdalene;* to her companions with her; to *Peter;* to the disciples going to Emmaus; to *James;* to the ten Apostles, *Thomas* not being present; to the Eleven, *Thomas* being present; to the Apostles again at the sea of *Tiberias;* to above five hundred brethren at once; to the Apostles before, and during, his ascension; and finally to St. *Paul* in his way to *Damascus.* Beside these instances, he appeared several times afterwards to St. *Paul;* and, as St. *Luke* informs us, *shewed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible proofs; being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* It ought to be particularly remembered, that in nine of the instances, mentioned above, he appeared to the Apostles themselves; in several instances to many, or all, of them; and once to more than five hundred disciples together. Should we then admit such an illusion of the senses, as infidels sometimes contend for, to be possible, and mankind to be capable of being deceived by it, in such degrees as *they* urge; still the improbability must, even according to their own principles, be very great, that two persons should, at the same time, experience exactly the same illusion concerning the same object, and concerning so many circumstances attending it. Of a fact, of this kind, history furnishes no record, and conversation no testimony. *All the extraordinary and inexplicable things, actually testified,* in which such illusions may be supposed to have taken place, *have invariably existed,* if they existed at all, *to the view of one person only.* No instance can be mentioned, in which *two* unexceptionable witnesses have testified to the same illusion, at the same time, concerning the same thing. Far more improbable is it, that *three* persons should thus experience the same illusion. When we raise this number to *Eleven,* the improbability becomes incalculable; and when to five hundred, it transcends all limit.

The improbability is also enhanced, without measure, by *the repetition of this fact in so many instances to so many persons, together with all the circumstances, by which it was attended.* But when we remember, that Christ not only appeared, but ate, drank, walked, and conversed, with them, at so many different times, through forty days; and declared to them a great number of divine truths concerning the kingdom of God; the improbability ceases, and is changed into an impossibility. The Apostles and their companions

had, here, all the evidence, that Christ was living, which they had of the life of each other: all the evidence, which we have, that those around us, with whom we have daily intercourse, are alive. If, then, the Apostles could be deceived, with respect to the fact, that Christ was living; they could with the same ease, be equally deceived with respect to the life of each other. With the same ease, can we be equally deceived in our belief, that men, whom we see daily, with whom we converse, and with whom we act; are living men. A stranger, who has visited us, continued with us forty days, conversed with us, and united with us in eating, drinking, and the serious business of life, must, on the same grounds, be denied, or doubted, to be a living man; and supposed to be a spectre, a phantom of the imagination, an illusion of the senses, or an inhabitant of a dream. To this length the principles carry us, on which alone we can deny, that the Apostles had perfect evidence, that Christ was alive after his death. He, who can admit these principles, has renounced the evidence of his senses; and ought from motives of consistency, to believe a man to be a post, as readily, as to believe him to be a man.

# SERMON LXII.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Acts iii. 15.———*And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses.*

IN the preceding discourse, I observed, that in this passage St. *Peter* declares to the *Jews* the three following things:

1st. *That they had killed the Prince of life:*

2dly. *That God had raised him from the dead:* and,

3dly. *That the Apostle himself and his companions were witnesses of these facts.*

The first of these assertions, I observed, had been scarcely controverted, and therefore needed no discussion from me. To establish the second, I remarked, was indispensable to a system of Christian Theology; as being the great point, on which such a system must depend; and therefore proposed it as the immediate object of that discourse. The evidence of its truth, I further observed, was chiefly furnished by the Apostles and their companions. This evidence, therefore, I proposed to state; and to show, that it was a proper and unexceptionable object of reliance for the truth of the important fact, declared in the text.

In pursuance of this design I observed, that, *if Christ was not raised from the dead, the Apostles were either themselves deceived, or have of design deceived others. That they themselves were not deceived,* I endeavoured to prove in that discourse, and shall now attempt to show.

II. *That they have not deceived others.*

By this you will understand, that *they have not deceived others of design:* all other deception having been considered under the former head.

In support of this assertion I observe,

1st. *That the known probity of the Apostles places them beyond every reasonable suspicion of intentional deception.*

The probity of the Apostles stands on higher ground, and has been regarded with higher confidence by mankind, than that of any other men whatever. This has been so often evinced, and with arguments so plainly unanswerable, that it would be probably thought tedious to expatiate on the subject at the present time. Suffice it, then, to say, that the histories, which they have given us of our Saviour's life, contain more internal, and decisive, proofs of sincerity, than any other human writings; that they recite facts, and utter doctrines, with a simplicity, and artlessness, unequalled,

that their story, both as to the subject, and as to the manner, is such, as no impostor could, or would tell; that the character of Christ is drawn with excellencies so great, combined with features so distinctive, as to prove it beyond the power of human invention, and much more beyond the invention of such humble, uneducated men; that, greatly as they respected him, horrible as were the injuries which he received from his enemies, gross and abominable as was the character of those enemies, and intensely as the Apostles abhorred both them and their conduct, they have recited his whole story without a single panegyrical remark concerning *him*, and without a single testimony of resentment, unkindness, or prejudice, against *them*. Let it be remembered, also, that no Impostor would have ever thought of terminating his account concerning a favourite and splendid character with the history of his trial and crucifixion as a malefactor; that no Impostor, if we were to suppose him to have done this, would have prefaced this history with a recital of his own disbelief, that this favourite was to die; especially after he had predicted his death, many times, in the plainest language; that no Impostor would have recorded his own ignorance, and disbelief, of the true character, mission, and doctrines, of the hero of his story; or his severe and stinging reproofs of his follies and faults, and all this without disguise or palliation; that the doctrines and precepts, contained in the Gospel, are beyond the discovery of *any* men, particularly of *such* men; that, if an Impostor could discover them, he could never have enjoined them on mankind, because of their spotless purity and perfect excellence; that every Impostor must, of course, have blended with the better doctrines and precepts, which he thought proper to deliver, others, sufficiently licentious to countenance, or at least to palliate, his own crimes; that the end, uniformly proposed, and intensely pursued, in the Gospel; viz. the amendment of the human character; is such, as no Impostor would be willing to promote; that four Impostors, writing independently, or without concert, could not possibly have exhibited the same accordance of facts, nor the same perfect harmony of doctrines; and that the character of the Apostles was, in their own age, not only unimpeached, but considered as superior to that of all other virtuous men. To these proofs of integrity ought to be added that decisive one; their cheerful relinquishment of all the pleasures of this life, and their voluntary endurance of all its distresses; and, in the end, their voluntary surrender of life itself; for the sake of the religion which they professed, and of the Master whom they served.

That men, who gave so many efficacious, and uniform, proofs, of integrity, should conspire to palm upon mankind this gross imposition, is too replete with absurdity, to be admitted by any sober man.

2dly. *The Apostles had no interest in attempting to deceive mankind, with respect to this event.*

In order to render the imposition profitable to its authors, it was necessary, that it should be believed; and, to gain credit elsewhere, it must first gain credit were it was originally published. The story was first declared to the *Jewish* nation; and without a single hope, or thought, of spreading it among other nations. It was for twelve years confined to *Jews* only. Now, let me ask, What inducement had the Apostles to believe, that a tale, so incredible in itself, would be received by this people? a tale concerning the resurrection of a crucified malefactor: for such, if false, must the story have been; and such, although true, it was believed to be by the *Jews*. By them Christ was regarded as an impostor; as a blasphemer of God; as an impious pretender to the Messiahship; and an impious opposer of a religion, unquestionably derived from heaven. Yet, with the *Jews*, this publication was to begin; and, so far as they knew, to end: *Jews* beyond example bigoted to their own religion, and furious in their hostility to every other; the bitter persecutors of Christ, while he lived; and the accusers and witnesses, who caused his death. What hope could any, but a madman, entertain, that among such people, such a story could gain even a solitary admission? To give credit to this story was, in a *Jew*, no other, than to yield up his religion; his bigotry; his connexion with the *Jewish* Church; his interest in the public opinion of his countrymen, and in the protection of its government. It was to expose his possessions, his family, and his life; to become excommunicated, outlawed, and an outcast from society; and to place himself within the reach of all the dreadful threatenings, contained in the law of *Moses*. At the same time, it was to acknowledge himself a murderer; a murderer of the Messiah; a murderer of the Son of God; to confess, that he had found this glorious person in the son of a carpenter; in a man, emphatically styled by him, and his countrymen, *a friend of publicans and sinners; a glutonous man, and a wine-bibber*. It was, also, to renounce all his bright and dawning hopes of the deliverance of himself, and his nation, from *Roman* servitude, by that mighty Prince, with whom they were all in hourly expectation of triumphing, and reigning, over every nation on earth. All this, also, was to be done without any good, to balance these mighty evils, either in hand, or in reversion. Never was there a field, so unpromising to the talents, or the efforts, of an impostor.

At the same time, this tale was to be told by the followers of the person professedly raised, and the enemies of those, to whom it was told; by men, poor, ignorant, and despised; without friends, and without influence; abhorred by their countrymen, and regarded as apostates from their religion. Never were persons so ill qualified for successful efforts at imposition. Suppose such a story were now to be told. None of these embarrassments, it is evident, would attend the recital, except those, which arise out of the story itself. The narrators would lie originally under no public

odium. The subject would be obnoxious to no peculiar prejudice. The reception of it would be followed by no peculiar sacrifices; by no civil or religious disqualifications; by no loss of property, reputation, safety, or even quiet. How plain is it, that such a story, if false, could not, even here, produce any other effect, but pity, contempt, and ridicule! To persuade others to believe it, is in the nature of the case, a thing so hopeless and desperate, that no Impostor has been found weak, rash, or impudent, enough, to think of making the attempt. But, of all persons on earth, none were ever more disadvantageously situated to propagate such a story, than the Apostles. The *Jews* were certainly less inclined to believe this story, than the Apostles themselves. *They* refused to believe it, long after very sufficient evidence had been furnished them of its truth. The *Jews* would certainly require evidence still more ample. This the Apostles could not but know; and, therefore, must have been hopeless of persuading them to believe it, unless themselves were able to support it by such evidence. But this evidence could never be produced in support of a falsehood.

If the story did not gain belief; the attempt to spread it could be of no possible use to the Apostles. As, then, they could not entertain a single hope of inducing the *Jews* to believe it; they could have no possible inducement to attempt to palm it upon the *Jews*. But if the *Jews* did not believe it, it could never be received by any other people. *Jews*, in great numbers, were scattered over all the countries, in which the Apostles could ever hope, or wish, to spread the story. These *Jews* carried on a continual correspondence with those at *Jerusalem;* and, in immense numbers, visited that city every year. If, then, the story was not believed at *Jerusalem;* this fact would be perfectly well known wherever *Jews* resided. But the knowledge, that the story gained no credit at *Jerusalem;* the place, where the event had professedly existed; would effectually prevent it from gaining the least credit in any other place. To the spot, where the event was said to exist, all thinking men would have recourse, to learn the true state of the evidence concerning it. If it was there found insufficient; it would at once be pronounced to be insufficient by all men. The Gospel was, probably, directed by Christ to be preached *first at Jerusalem*, and in *Judea*, for this, as one great reason; that the story of his resurrection, on which his whole scheme depended, being established there in the immoveable belief of multitudes, might be successfully and irresistibly published in other countries.

But, whatever advantages the Apostles could derive, or expect to derive, from their imposture, (if it was one) must be wholly derived from persuading mankind to believe this story. They themselves perfectly understood, and frankly declared to mankind, that their whole system turned on this single hinge. *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;* is the constant language of all which they said. For proof of this

you need only examine the sermons of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Unless this fact were established, therefore, they could not hope for a single follower, nor for the smallest reward. But of the establishment of this fact among either *Jews*, or *Gentiles*, I flatter myself I have shown, they could not, in the existing circumstances, form even the remotest hope. They had not, therefore, the smallest interest in making the attempt.

3dly. *They were assured, with absolute certainty, of suffering every imaginable disadvantage.*

All the losses and injuries, mentioned under the preceding head, must have stared them in the face at the beginning. At every step of their progress new evils could not fail to arise; and those of the most distressing kind. Had they been blind enough not to have perceived their miserable destiny, before they commenced this wretched work of deception; the first attempt could not fail to produce the most ample conviction: and to this, every new attempt would add fresh proof. The scourge, the prison, and the cross, have always proved effectual antidotes to imposition. All other dishonest men are, equally with *Voltaire*, no friends to Martyrdom. Had the Apostles possessed the same character, they would have soon been wearied of the sufferings which they every where underwent. Every where they were hated; calumniated; despised; hunted from city to city; thrust into prison; scourged; stoned; and crucified. For what where all these excruciating sufferings endured? Gain, honour, and pleasure, are the only gods, to which Impostors bow. But of these the Apostles acquired, and plainly laboured to acquire, neither. What, then, was the end, for which they suffered? Let the Infidel answer this question.

As they gained nothing, and lost every thing, in the present world; so it is certain, that they must expect to gain nothing, and suffer every thing, in the world to come. That the Old Testament was the Word of God, they certainly believed without a single doubt. But, in this Book, *lying* is exhibited as a supreme object of the Divine abhorrence, and the Scriptural threatenings. From the invention, and propagation, of this falsehood, therefore, they could expect nothing, hereafter, but the severest effusions of the anger of God.

For what, then, was all this loss, danger, and suffering, incurred? For the privilege of telling an extravagant and incredible story to mankind, and of founding on it a series of exhortations to repentance, faith, and holiness; to the renunciation of sin, and the universal exercise of piety, justice, truth, and kindness; to the practice of all that conduct, which common sense has ever pronounced to be the duty, honour, and happiness of man; and the avoidance of all that, which it has ever declared to be his guilt, debasement, and misery. Such an End was never even wished, much less seriously proposed, by an impostor.

At the same time, they lived as no impostor ever lived; and were able to say to their converts, with a full assurance of finding a cordial belief of the declaration: *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamcably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe.* That this was their true character is certain, from the concurrent testimony of all antiquity. Had they not nobly recorded their own faults; there is not the least reason to believe, that a single stain would have ever rested upon their character.

If, then, the Apostles invented this story; they invented it without the remotest hope, or prospect, of making it believed; a thing which was never done by an impostor; propagated it without any interest; without any hope of gain, honour, power, or pleasure; the only objects, by which impostors were ever allured; and with losses and sufferings, which no impostor ever voluntarily underwent; proposed as their only End, or at least the only end which has ever been discovered to mankind, an object, which no impostor ever pursued, or even wished; and, during their whole progress through life, lived so as no impostor ever lived; and so as to be the most perfect contrast, ever exhibited by men, to the whole character of imposition.

III. *The Apostles were not deceived, and did not deceive others, with regard to this fact; but the fact was real.*

In support of this declaration I observe,

1st. *That, if Christ was not raised from the dead, it could certainly have been proved.*

Christ was put to death by the *Roman* Governor, at the instigation of the government and nation of the *Jews*. His body was in their hands, and entirely under their control. They knew, that he had predicted his resurrection. They knew, that, if he should rise, or should be believed to have risen, his cause would gain more by this fact, or by this belief, than by every thing which he had taught, or done, during his life. All this they declare to *Pilate* in form, for the express purpose of guarding against this dreaded evil. *Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation*, says St. *Matthew, the chief Priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember, that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made fast until the third day; lest his disciples come by night*, and *steal him away; and say unto the people. He is risen from the dead. So the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way; make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.* In this remarkable passage we have a distinct account of their knowledge of Christ's prediction, that he should rise on the third day; of their dread of the prevalence of a future belief, that he had risen; of their conviction, that this belief would advance his cause more than all his preaching, life, and miracles: and their earnest request to the Governor, that

effectual measures might be taken to prevent this peculiar evil. We are further informed, that the Governor, in compliance with their fears, and their wishes, after reminding them that they had a watch, or guard, under their control, directed them, with a communication of unlimited authority, *to make the sepulchre as sure as they could.* Finally, we are informed, that, with this power in their hands, *they went their way, and made the sepulchre sure:* that is, according to their own judgment: and we are completely assured, that such eagle-eyed and bitter enemies, under the influence of such apprehensions, left no precaution untried, to secure themselves against the danger, which they dreaded. Accordingly, the Evangelist informs us, that they not only set a guard at the sepulchre, which we may be certain was more than sufficient; but also *set a seal upon the stone which was rolled to it for a door;* in order to produce complete and universal conviction, that Christ was not raised, because the seal was unbroken.

But, notwithstanding all these precautions, thus carefully taken, the body was missing. In this great fact the *Sanhedrim* and the Apostles perfectly agree: it cannot therefore be questioned. The *Sanhedrim* would, otherwise, have certainly produced it; and thus detected the falsehood of the Apostles' declaration, that he was risen from the dead, and prevented it from gaining credit among the *Jews.*

There are but two ways, in which it could be missing. It was taken away; or it was raised. If it was taken away; it was undoubtedly taken by the Apostles. But this was not true; because,

First, *They had no Interest in taking it away.*

Christ had declared, that *he should rise from the dead.* The mere taking away of his body, instead of evincing the truth of this prediction to the Apostles themselves, would have been an unanswerable proof of its falsehood; and, by consequence, of the falsehood of him who uttered it. If the prediction were unfulfilled, of which the presence of his dead body would have been the proper and complete proof; Christ was a false prophet; an Impostor. Of course, the Apostles could expect no possible advantage from following him; and plainly saw themselves exposed to every disadvantage. They had, therefore, no conceivable inducement to take away his body, nor even to accept it, if it had been offered to them freely. This, it is believed, has been sufficiently evinced under a former head.

To others they could never produce the body of Christ, as evidence, either of *his* sincerity, or *their own*: for it would have completely destroyed the character of both. The only end, therefore, which the theft could answer, would have been to gain some credit to the story of his resurrection, from the fact, that his body was missing. When we consider, that the body was perfectly in the power of their enemies, the *Jewish Sanhedrim;* it must be acknowledged, that an argument of some force might be drawn from this

fact, in favour of Christ's resurrection. At the same time it is evident, that this single fact would have been wholly insufficient to establish the point; and the Apostles, in attempting to palm the story on the world, would have engaged in a cause wholly desperate. *We* demand very important additional proof, derived from other sources, to establish this point in our own minds. The necessity of such proof the Apostles could not but have seen with at least as much certainty, as ourselves; they could, therefore, never have been willing to take it away, for this purpose.

Secondly, *The Apostles durst not take away the body of Christ.*

They knew that a guard was placed at the Sepulchre; a numerous and amply sufficient band of Roman soldiers. *They themselves* were few, friendless, and discouraged; in hourly expectation of being arrested, and put to death, as followers of Christ; and voluntarily confined to a solitary chamber, for fear of being either crucified or stoned. *The time* was that of the *Passover;* when *Jerusalem* customarily contained more than a million of people. It was the time of the *full moon*. The *sepulchre* was just without the walls of the city; and exposed, therefore, to continual inspection. How could a body of men, who had just before fled from a similar guard, notwithstanding their Master was present with them, venture to attack this band of armed soldiers, for the purpose of removing the body of Christ from the sepulchre? How, especially, could they make this attempt, when they had nothing to gain; and when they must become guilty of rebelling against the Roman Government; and, if they escaped death from the hands of the soldiers, were exposed to this evil in a much more terrible form?

Thirdly, *The Apostles, with respect to this subject, had formed no plan; and entertained no expectations, and no hopes.*

They disbelieved the story of his resurrection, when asserted by the most unsuspicious witnesses: his female disciples, and their own companions. Nay, they disbelieved it, after he had appeared several times; when they had seen, and known, that his body was gone from the sepulchre; and even when he had appeared to themselves. The truth is, they were completely discouraged and broken-hearted. The death of Christ had violated all their prejudices, destroyed their fondest hopes, and sunk their spirits in the dust. Nor was any expedient less fitted to revive their hopes, than the wretched cheat, imputed to them by their enemies.

Fourthly, *The story told concerning this subject by the Sanhedrim, and thoughtlessly believed by the great body of the Jews, even to the present time, is itself strong evidence of the truth of the assertion, which I am maintaining.*

This story, as you well know, is, *that the disciples stole the body of Christ, while the guards were asleep.* I will not, here, insist on the ridiculousness of this story; but will only consider it as the real account, given by the *Sanhedrim* concerning the disappearing of the body from the sepulchre. This sagacious collection of men,

sharpened into extreme cunning by the constant management of human affairs in very difficult times, thought it proper to tell the world this story, as the best account which they could give of the subject. To what straits must their ingenuity have been driven, when they were compelled to such a resort? Every man knows, that the guards would, of their own accord, have never ventured upon such a narration: for it would have been the infallible cause of their condemnation to death. It is scarcely possible, that a *Roman Sentinel* should acknowledge himself to have slept upon his post: nor is it much more possible, that a *Jewish Senate* should, unless under extreme pressure of circumstances, publicly accord with so contemptible a tale. Had that senate been possessed of any truth, which would at all have favoured their designs; they would have never disgraced their character by acknowledging their reliance, and persuading their countrymen to rely, on the testimony of a Heathen guard, nor of any other men, concerning what was done when they were asleep. Had truth favoured their wishes in any manner, neither the senate, nor the people, of the *Jews*, would have rested themselves, in a case of this consequence, nor indeed in any case, upon a story, which carried with it its own refutation.

2dly. *The Jews in great numbers believed the Resurrection of Christ.*

The *Jews* most ardently hated Christ and his Apostles. Him they persecuted throughout his public ministry; and at the end of it nailed him to the cross. The Apostles directly charged them with these enormous crimes; particularly in this very sermon of St. *Peter*, from which I have taken my Text. On this ground, they urged them to repentance: asserting always before them, that he had risen from the dead. Clear and unanswerable evidence, as I have already remarked, is necessary to convince the most candid man of so wonderful an event. But, to convince *Jews*, that the man, whom they had hated and crucified, was risen from the dead; *Jews*, so opposed to his character, mission, and doctrines; *Jews*, who, in admitting his resurrection, acknowledged themselves to have sinned in a manner unparalleled; demanded singular evidence. Yet three thousand of these *Jews* believed the Apostles' declaration of this fact, on the day of Pentecost; fifty days only after the crucifixion. Within a few days more, five thousand others adopted the same belief; and, soon afterward, very great multitudes.

The evidence of their faith is complete. All these men publicly professed it; and, in spite of their former prejudices, and their furious hatred, submitted themselves to Christ, as the Messiah. *This crucified man* they acknowledged in that glorious character; and yielded themselves to him, as the Son of God. *Judaism*, to which they had been attached with such bigotry, they now publicly renounced; and gave up their ceremonious worship, their Sabbath,

Temple, Priests, and Sacraments; adopting in their stead the Christian worship, Sabbath, and Sacraments; submitting themselves to the ministers of the Gospel; and embracing a new life; a life of real holiness; to them in the highest degree self-denying and difficult. A great number of them, also, sold their possessions, and distributed the avails of them, in mere charity, to their Christian Brethren. Beyond this, these converts voluntarily forsook their friends, their interests, and their hopes; and underwent a series of dreadful sufferings, terminating, not unfrequently, in a violent death.

To persuade men to renounce their religion, especially bigoted men, and to exchange a sinful life for a virtuous one, is undoubtedly as hard a task, as was ever assigned to the human mind: especially, when that religion contravenes all the selfishness of man. *Jews* now exist in great numbers; and have existed ever since the crucifixion of Christ. They hold the same character, and the same religion. Christianity, the religion to which they are to be converted, is also the same. But more *Jews* were made converts to the religion of Christ by these two sermons of St. *Peter*, than have embraced it within the last sixteen hundred years. It is therefore certain, that the Apostles possessed advantages for this end, which their followers have not possessed: and these advantages, independently of miracles, consisted, in a great measure at least, in the peculiar circumstances of their hearers. They knew and remembered the life, preaching, and miracles of Christ; and the wonderful events, which attended his death. These, as is obvious from the declaration of St. *Luke*, greatly affected their minds. *And all the people*, says the Evangelist, *that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts, and returned.* The *guards*, also, went into the city, and told the story of the descent of *the Angel, who rolled away the stone from the sepulchre;* the awful circumstances, by which he was attended; and the resurrection of Christ.* When to these things were added the miraculous events of the day of Pentecost, and the marvellous cure of the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple; these *Jews* yielded up their prejudices, and submitted to truths, which they could no longer resist. The facts, here specified, were, in the hands of the Spirit of grace, the means, by which such multitudes of enemies were converted to the faith of the Gospel.

3dly. *The Sanhedrim believed the resurrection of Christ.*

In the 4th of the Acts, we are informed, that the *Sanhedrim* had the Apostles brought before them for preaching, in the name of Christ, the doctrines of Christianity; and for affirming, that Christ was risen from the dead. Had they believed, that the Apostles *stole away the body of Christ*, they would now certainly have charged them with this gross fraud; this direct rebellion against

* Matthew xxviii. 11.

the *Roman* and *Jewish* Governments; and, unless they could have cleared themselves of the crime, would have punished them for it with, at least, due severity. Such punishment would not only have been just; but it had now become necessary for the Sanhedrim to inflict it, in order to save their own reputation. They had originated the story; and were now under the strongest inducements to support it. Yet they did not even mention the subject; but contented themselves with commanding them to preach no more in the name of Christ.

In Acts 5th, we are told, that the whole body of the Apostles were brought before them again; for continuing to preach, in opposition to this command. On this occasion also, they kept a profound silence concerning the theft, which they had originally attributed to the Apostles; but charged them with disobedience to their former injunctions. In this charge are contained the following remarkable words: *Did we not straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. To bring the blood of one person upon another* is phrascology, frequently used in the Bible. In fifteen* different instances, in which we find it there, it has but a single meaning: viz. *to bring the guilt of contributing to the death of a person, or the guilt of murder, upon another person.* When it is said, *His blood shall be upon his own head;* it is clearly intended, that the guilt of his death shall be upon himself. When, therefore, the *Sanhedrim* accuse the Apostles of attempting to bring the blood of Christ upon *them:* they accuse them of an intention to bring upon them the guilt of shedding his blood: this being the only meaning of such phrascology in the Scriptures.

Should any doubt remain in the mind of any man concerning this interpretation; it may be settled, I think, beyond all question, by recurring to another passage, to which, hitherto, I have not alluded. In Matthew xxvii. 24, 25, we are told, that, when *Pilate saw, that he could prevail nothing* towards releasing Christ, *he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude: saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it:* and that then, *all the people answered, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.* The meaning of the phrascology in this passage cannot be mistaken: and it is altogether probable, that the declaration of the *Sanhedrim*, being made, so soon after this imprecation, to the Apostles, so deeply interested in the subject, and on an occasion, which so naturally called it up to view, the *Sanhedrim* referred to it directly.

But if Christ was not raised from the dead; he was a false prophet; an impostor; and, of course, a Blasphemer: because he

* Lev. xx. 9, 11, 13, 16, 27. Deut. xix. 10. xxii. 8. 2 Sam. i. 16. xvi. 3. 1 Kings ii. 37. Jer. li. 35. Ezek. xviii. 13. xxxiii. 5. Matt. xxiii. 35. Acts xviii. 6.

asserted himself to be the Messiah; the Son of God. Such a blasphemer the law of God condemned to death. The *Sanhedrim* were the very persons, to whom the business of trying, and condemning him, was committed by that law, and whose duty it was to accomplish his death. If, therefore, his body was not raised from the dead; there was no guilt in shedding his blood, but the mere performance of a plain duty. His blood, that is, the guilt of shedding it, could not possibly rest on the Sanhedrim; nor, to use their language, be brought upon them by the Apostles, nor by any others. All this the *Sanhedrim* perfectly knew: and therefore, had they not believed him to have risen from the dead, they could never have used this phraseology.

It is further to be observed, that, on both these occasions, the Apostles boldly declared to the *Sanhedrim*, in the most explicit terms, that Christ was raised from the dead. Yet the *Sanhedrim* not only did not charge them with the crime of having stolen his body, but did not contradict, nor even comment on, the declaration. This could not possibly have happened through inattention. Both the Sanhedrim, and the Apostles, completely knew, that the resurrection of Christ was the point, on which his cause, and their opposition to it, entirely turned. It was the great and serious controversy between the contending parties; and yet, though directly asserted to their faces by the Apostles, the *Sanhedrim* did not even utter a syllable on the subject.

Had they believed their own story, they would either have punished the Apostles with death, as rebels against the *Jewish* and *Roman* governments; or confined them, as lunatics, in a bedlam.

IV. *Christ was raised from the dead, because the Apostles converted mankind to his religion.*

The Apostles, from the beginning to the end, published the story of Christ's resurrection, as the proof of his mission, and doctrines; and as the foundation, on which rested their own commission, and the truth of the religion, which they taught. To prove the reality of his resurrection, they publicly declared, that he had invested them with the power of working miracles, on all occasions; and openly asserted, that they were possessed of this power. Here, then, the cause was fairly at issue between them and mankind. If they wrought miracles, in proof of this story; the story was true of course; because, as I observed in a preceding discourse, none, but God, can work a miracle; and God cannot support a falsehood.

That this was the real profession of the Apostles, is unitedly testified, without one dissenting voice, by all antiquity; *Heathen*, *Jewish*, and *Christian*. It is, therefore, certainly true.

If the Apostles, after having made this profession, did not work miracles; they were convicted of falsehood in a moment. Their cause fell at once: for they had rested it wholly on this single fact. The weakest man would see at a glance, that they were

cheats, and liars; and could never place the least confidence in any of their declarations. They could not, therefore, have made a single convert.

But they did convert a great part of the civilized, and not a small part of the savage, world. They, therefore, certainly wrought miracles, in the manner which they professed, as proof of the reality of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was of course real. God set to it his own seal; and placed it beyond every reasonable doubt.

That the Apostles wrought miracles, in great numbers, is completely proved, also, by the united testimony of *Heathen*, *Jews*, and *Christians*. All these classes of men were deeply interested to deny this fact, if it could with any pretence be denied. The *Heathen* and *Jews* would certainly have denied it; because they wished to prevent, as far as possible, other *Heathen* and other *Jews* from embracing Christianity; and because, if they could have supported the denial, they would have stopped the growth of that religion in its infancy. *Christians* would have denied it, that is, such as became Christians in consequence of a belief in these miracles under any illusion, which could have been practised on them, because they would certainly have detected the cheat; and must have strongly resented the villany, by which it had been played off upon themselves. I say these things, admitting the supposition, that the imposture might succeed for a time. But, to my own view, such success must plainly have been impossible.

All these persons have, however, agreed in asserting that the Apostles wrought miracles. The *Jews* and *Heathen* attributed them to magic. Christians, under the influence of their conviction, that miracles were thus wrought, hazarded, and yielded, every enjoyment of life, and very often life itself.

We have now, if I do not mistake, come to the clear and certain conclusion, that Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God. But if Christ was raised from the dead; it follows by irresistible consequence, that he was approved of God; and of course that he was the Son of God, and the promised Messiah; sent from Heaven to communicate the Divine will to mankind concerning their duty and salvation. The religion which he taught, is in all its parts Divine truth; the will of our Maker; and the sum, and substance, of all our interest and duty. Of course, it cannot be rejected without infinite hazard; it cannot be embraced without complete assurance of infinite gain: the favour of God in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

# SERMON LXIII.

AMIABLENESS OF CHRIST IN PUBLISHING THE GOSPEL TO MANKIND.

Isaiah lii. 7.—*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.*

In a long series of discourses I have investigated, minutely, the Character and Mediation of Christ; and have considered his Divine and human nature; his Offices, as a Prophet, Priest, and King; his Miracles; and his Resurrection. I shall now close this great and interesting subject of Theology by attempting to exhibit, summarily, *the Excellency and Amiableness of Christ, as manifested in his interference on the behalf of mankind.*

In the text, the prophet *Isaiah* presents to us the advent of a Messenger of good tidings to mankind. This Messenger is represented as announcing to the world *good*, or *happness*, *at large;* as publishing *peace*, *salvation*, and the glorious news, *that the God*, who reigns universally, *is the God of Zion.* His appearance is exhibited by the Prophet as filling his own mind with astonishment and ecstasy. Nothing could more forcibly convey to us the prophet's rapturous sense of the importance of these tidings, or his exalted views of the messenger who brought them, than the manner, in which he dwells on these subjects, in the repeated and fervid exclamations of the text. When the soul becomes the seat of strong emotions, and especially when it is agitated by strong alternations of wonder and joy; it usually finds language, in every form of phraseology, too feeble to give full vent to its feelings, or to convey them to others with such force, as to satisfy the demands either of the imagination or the passions. When we ourselves feel, we wish others to feel; and when our emotions become peculiarly ardent, we are prone to fear, that the corresponding emotions of others will be less vivid than we desire. The mind, in this case, seizes the most forcible language within its reach; and, conscious that even this language halts behind its own fervours, naturally seeks to increase the impressions, by reiterating them in new and more animated phraseology. From this source were derived the exclamations of the text; peculiarly suited to the mind of *Isaiah;* whose imagination was not only more sublime, but on all occasions more ready to glow, than that of any other writer.

St. *Paul* applies this text to the Ministers of the Gospel generally; and perhaps more especially to the first Ministers. This ap-

plication teaches us, decisively, that *the Gospel*, the meaning of which word you know is merely *good tidings*, is the subject of the annunciation in the text; and that Ministers of the Gospel, at large, are, in a loose and general sense, included in the purport of these exclamations. The prophet, however, speaks of one Messenger only; and this Messenger is the person, who publishes the Gospel to mankind. The Lord Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the Messenger, here intended; by whose voice the Gospel was originally communicated to the world. The Prophet, who, beyond any other writer, embodies all his thoughts, and holds them out to the view of the eye, exhibits this divine herald as advancing over the mountains surrounding the city of *Jerusalem*, and as proclaiming joyful news to its inhabitants. The reader is transported to the spot; sees this illustrious person approach; hears him proclaim the tidings, which he comes to announce; and unites with the prophet, and his exulting countrymen, in their joyful exclamations.

The only characteristical circumstance, on which the prophet rests in the text, is *the beauty which adorned the person of this glorious Messenger. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!* To the consideration of this subject I propose to devote the following discourse.

In the discussion of it I shall consider,

I. *The Persons to whom these tidings were published:*

II. *The tidings themselves:* and,

III. *The Messenger who published them.*

I. *The Persons to whom these tidings were published, were the children of Apostate Adam.*

It will be useful to the design which I have proposed, to consider both *their character* and *their circumstances*.

Their character, like that of their progenitor, was formed of Apostacy. Every man, who searches his own bosom, or examines the conduct of his own life, is presented with irresistible evidence, that he is a sinner. Let him form whatever rule of life he is pleased to prescribe, by which his duty to himself, to his fellow-men, and to God, ought, even in his own view, to be regulated; and he will find himself, in innumerable instances, a transgressor of that rule. The Heathen Philosophers anciently, and the Infidels of modern times, have formed such rules. *Weigh* them in their own *balances*, and they will invariably *be found wanting*. Lax, licentious, and even monstrous, as the laws are which they have proposed for the regulation of their own moral conduct, they still have not obeyed them; and will, if tried by them, be certainly condemned. How much more defective do they appear, when examined by the dictates of a sober and enlightened conscience! How far more defective, when tried by the perfect law of God! Searched by this law, it will be uniformly found, and every man, faithfully

employed in the search, will be obliged to confess that *in our flesh dwelleth no good thing.*

Among the most affecting specimens of this evil character, a conscientious investigator will be deeply afflicted with those, *which constitute his own personal debasement.* If he open his eye on what he has been, and what he has done; he will find the most abundant reason to exclaim, with Job, *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* He will find, that he has in the true and evangelical sense, neither loved God, nor man; that he has neither accepted of his Saviour, nor repented of his sins; that he has neither laboured to be a blessing, nor even endeavoured not to be a nuisance to the divine kingdom. Instead of worshipping God *in spirit and in truth*, according to the first dictates of his conscience, and of revelation, he will find, that he has, in truth, prostrated himself to gold, to office, to fame, and to pleasure. Instead of the exact justice, unwavering truth, and expansive benevolence, of the Gospel, he will see, written in the volume of his life with a pen of iron, a succession of melancholy scenes, and acts of unkindness, insincerity, and injustice; all contrived, and finished, by a mind shrunk with selfishness, swollen with pride, heated with anger, debased with avarice, and steeled with insensibility. Page after page he will see stained with the licentious wanderings of an impure imagination, and deformed by the malignant purposes of an envious, angry, and revengeful spirit. In vain will his eye, pained with these narratives of shame and sin, wander from one leaf to another with an anxious, inquisitive search, to find the delightful records of filial confidence, submission, and gratitude, to the Creator; or the sweet and cheering remembrances of Evangelical charity towards those around him; or a portrait of himself, which shall be a fair counterpart to that of the good *Samaritan.* In vain will he watch and explore the humiliating story, to glean from it refreshing recollections of self-purification, the refinement of his mind, the amendment of his heart, or the cleansing of his life. Over himself he will find the most distressing reasons to mourn, as over a graceless and ruined child; ruined, on the one hand, by the gratification of pernicious appetites and passions, and on the other, by a senseless, thoughtless indulgence, doting with a mixture of idiocy and madness.

The public exhibitions of the human character are still more striking displays of human guilt. Almost the only government of mankind has been tyranny. Almost all the conduct of nations may be summed up in the rage of plunder, the fury of war, and the frenzy of civil discord. Men seem to have thought their blessings too numerous, and too great, and the duration of their life too long. Accordingly they have robbed each other of the former, shortened the latter, and struggled hard to reduce both to nothing. At what time has human blood ceased to flow? In what country have rage and revenge ceased to desolate? When, and where

have the cries of mourning and misery ceased to resound? The groans of suffering have echoed from *California* to *Japan*. The stream of sorrow has flowed without interruption for six thousand years. On all the public concerns of man; on every nation, on every age; have been labelled *Lamentation, Mourning, and Wo!*

Such has been the conduct of man towards man. Not less shameful, not less guilty, has been the conduct of man towards his Maker. Instead of rendering to this glorious Being, *whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve*, the direct, instinctive homage of the heart, and cheerful obedience of the hands; instead of acknowledging his rightful government, rejoicing in his divine perfections, and voluntarily labouring to accomplish his exalted purposes; we have said to him with one united voice: *Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* For Jehovah, the only living and true God, mankind have substituted deities, formed by the imagination, graven by art, and molten in the furnace. The forest has been scoured, the ocean swept, and the sky ransacked, for objects of worship. The world has prostrated itself before men, deformed with villany, and putrid with pollution. The knee has bent to the ox, the snake, the frog, and the fly. Nay, the heart has yielded its homage, prayers, and oblations, to the stock of a tree; and parents have sacrificed their children to the great enemy of God and man. Look over the long page of history; and you will be astonished to see how rarely a country is mentioned, and how rarely a period occurs, in which you would be willing to have lived.

But guilt is not the only ingredient of the human character. It is scarcely less humble and insignificant, than it is guilty. We are born of the dust, allied to worms, and victims to corruption. Weak, ignorant, frail, perishing, and possessed only of an ephemeral existence, we still are proud; proud of our reason with all its errors, and of our temper with all its sins. We claim a kindred to Angels; but by a voluntary slavery to passion and appetite, assimilate ourselves to *the beasts which perish.* We boast loudly of the dignity of our nature; and prostitute that nature, daily, on objects of shame, and remorse, and to purposes, which we would not, for a world, have known even to our nearest friends. What a dreadful display of our character would our thoughts, wishes, and designs, make to mankind, if they were all printed in a volume, and read even by such eyes as ours! How few thoughts do we form, which we should be willing to have an Angel know! How few purposes, over which an Angel would not weep!

In this character, at the same time, we are immoveably fixed and perverse. No event in the immense providence of God has contributed to prove, that there is in a sinful mind a tendency to renovation. Arguments plead, reason testifies, judgments warn, and mercies allure, in vain. The sinful heart is incased in adamant.

and is proof even to the arrows of the Almighty. God *calls* earnestly, and continually; but we *refuse*. *He stretches out his hand*, both to smite and to heal, *but we disregard*.

In consequence of our *Character*, our *Circumstances* have become deplorable. The law of God, with an unalterable sentence, has declared, that *the soul which sinneth shall die*. As a prelude to the execution of this penalty, thorns and briers have overspread this melancholy world. Toil and care, and suffering, disease and death, entered paradise, the moment it was polluted by sin; withered all its bloom; and blasted its immortality. Death, the dreadful offspring of this dreadful parent, has claimed the earth as his empire, and mankind as his prey. All nations have perished under his iron sceptre; *the young man and maiden, old men and children*. Half mankind has he compelled to the grave in the dawn of childhood; and converted the world into one vast burying ground. We walk on human dust; and the remains of men once living, are turned up by the plough, and blown about by the wind.

From this deplorable lot, and the guilty character of which it is the reward, there was, independently of Christ's Mediation, no escape; and to both there was no end. With heaven our communication was cut off. No messenger ever came from that delightful world, to sooth the fears, or awaken the hopes, of mankind, concerning a future existence. If in the vast of being, or the boundless extent of divine Benevolence, good was laid up in store for them; it was unknown. No tidings of relief or hope, no intimations of forgiveness or reconciliation, had ever reached this desolate region. Eternity, solemn and awful in itself, and more solemn and awful from its obscurity, became intensely dreadful to beings, who could make no claims to acceptance, and find no solid ground of hope.

To such beings, how delightful must be any tidings of good! How much more delightful, tidings of extensive good! How transporting, tidings of such good, which by their certainty, banished distrust and doubt from the Soul!

II. *The Nature of these tidings next demands our consideration.*

This is exhibited *in five forms of phraseology: That bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.* The *first* and *third* of these forms indicate, generally, that the tidings are good, or joyful; and tidings concerning good of great value. The remaining forms teach us the nature of that good.

In *the two first mentioned forms* of expression, we are assured, that the subject of these tidings is *real good, attainable by us, reserved by God for our enjoyment, certain, future, and immortal.* Good fitted for the enjoyment of such minds as ours; such as God himself esteems real good; and such as it becomes his character to proffer, and to bestow. The tidings concerning this glorious

allotment are, also, in themselves pronounced to be good; because they are sincere and certain, and because they communicate easy and effectual means of making it ours.

It is styled, *in the second phrase, Peace.* Peace is *the cessation of war*, or *contention;* and in the present case, *the cessation of our hostility with God, ourselves, and our fellow-men.* The soul of Man is *at war with his Maker.* The great subject of controversy, here, is our obedience to his Will. This *He* requires, and *we* refuse. Nothing can terminate the contest, but our submission: for it cannot be supposed, that the Creator will bend his own pleasure to the rebellious spirit of his creatures. In announcing these tidings to mankind, Christ first proclaims to them, that God is willing to be reconciled. This is intelligence, which, before the mediation of Christ commenced, could never have gained credit, even in the world of benevolence itself. Angels knew no reward for revolt from their Creator, but final rejection: the reward, to which their own companions had been irrevocably condemned. With wonder and amazement they saw a new system of dispensations commencing in this apostate world, and heard forgiveness and reconciliation proclaimed to man. Humble as was our origin, guilty and little as was our character, we were commanded, invited, and entreated, to lay down the weapons of our warfare; to return to God our duty, and our happiness; and to receive from his hands peace, commencing in this world and extending its benign and delightful influence throughout eternity.

*The soul, reconciled to its God, becomes at once reconciled to itself.* With himself man is as truly at war, as with his Maker. A contention, real, unceasing, and violent, is carried on between the conscience and the passions. Conscience claims to control the man, as her original and rightful province. Against this claim a mob of furious passions revolt; and demand, and wrest out of her hands, the controverted dominion. As in all cases, where the order established by God becomes inverted; so, here, every real interest is sacrificed. The soul is debased with guilt, harassed by fear, tossed by a tempest of conflicting desires, wounded with remorse, and hastened onward to final destruction. Conscience, in the mean time, infixes all her stings into the heart of this miserable subject of domestic discord, and holds up her awful mirror before his eyes; presenting him with an exact and terrible portrait of himself; pale; languid; sickly with mental diseases; his spiritual life already gone; and himself, both soul and body, destined speedily to an eternal grave. But when the soul submits to its Maker, and bows its own will to his, the man becomes reconciled to himself. The control of Conscience is not only permitted, but chosen. The froward passions, like stubborn children, who have renounced their filial impiety, bend with a gentleness and serenity, before unknown, to a dominion, now first discovered not only to be safe, but easy, reasonable, and delightful. No longer a seat

of confusion and discord, the soul becomes, henceforth, a mansion of peace and harmony; where sweet affections rise and operate, under the control, and the approbation of Conscience. The man is reconciled to himself; and, turning his eye inward, beholds henceforth a prospect beautiful and lovely; an image of heaven; a resemblance, faint and distant indeed, but still a real resemblance, to the character of his Maker.

*Peace with our fellow-men* is the natural consequence of *peace with ourselves;* not indeed necessarily, nor uniformly; but always, so far as they are possessed of the same blessing, and under the influence of the same disposition. While the same internal hostility predominates in them, they are unfitted to be at peace with God, or man. But the period is hastening, when this happy state of mind shall be the state of all men, and peace shall prevail on earth, according to the full import of the hymn, sung by Angels at the birth of the Saviour. The tidings of the text will then be illustriously realized; and man, at peace with his Maker, and himself, will be at peace also with all his fellow-men. The *confused noise of the battle of the warrior* will then be heard no more; and *garments* be seen no more *rolled in blood. Violence shall*, then, *be no more heard in the* world; *wasting, nor destruction, within its borders.* The earth, no longer convulsed by human passions; no longer gloomy and desolate with the miseries of human conflicts; will assume the aspect of a delightful morning in the spring; where all is verdant and blooming beneath, and all is bright and glorious above.

In the fourth of these forms of expression, this good is styled *Salvation.*

Salvation denotes *a deliverance from evil, and an introduction to the enjoyment of good.* In the present case, both the evil and the good are immeasurable.

*The evil is two-fold; a compound of sin and misery;* both imperfect in this world, and both finished in the world to come. From both, in this world, the deliverance announced is partial; beginning from nothing, and enlarging, and ascending, with a constant, though unequal progress towards perfection. The soul, before a mass of deformity and corruption, begins to be adorned with life, and grace, and beauty. With it angels love to commune; on it God is pleased to look with complacency.

From future sin and future misery the deliverance is complete. With death, our last sins terminate; and our last misery is undergone. Cast your eyes forward through the vast of duration; and think what it would be to sin and suffer for ever. How amazing the evil! How astonishing the deliverance!

*The good announced is two-fold also; a glorious union of Virtue and Enjoyment:* like the evil, imperfect here, and consummate hereafter. The Virtue of man in his present state is infantine; tottering with an unsettled step, and lisping with half-formed ac-

cents. In the future state, the Mind, advanced to perfect manhood, is completely sanctified; and cannot fail of being completely blessed. To Enjoyment and Virtue that state is wholly destined. Every thing found in it, as once in the earthly paradise, blossoms with life and happiness, and like *Adam*, all its inhabitants are formed for immortality.

In *the last phrase* of the Text, this good is disclosed to us in the declaration; *that saith unto Zion*, THY GOD REIGNETH.

God, the Author of all being, is the source of all good. *Every good gift*, in this and all other worlds, *and every perfect gift, is from above; and cometh down from the* FATHER OF LIGHTS, *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* From Him, the ocean, flow all those streams of holiness, which water, enrich, and beautify, his immeasurable kingdom. His Character, his moral Essence, is *Love;* and, wherever happiness is found, it may justly be said, that the name of every blessing, is like that of the City seen in vision by Ezekiel, THE LORD IS THERE.

With these tidings resounding in their ears, the children of Zion may joyfully say, *This God is our God for ever and ever.* To their present and everlasting good his boundless power, wisdom, and goodness, are by himself graciously consecrated. To renew, purify, preserve, protect, enlighten, guide, quicken, and save, them in this world; and to form them in his own perfect image, and exalt them to his own perfect felicity in the world to come; is declared to be his constant and favourite employment. In that glorious and happy world, he will unveil his face to them; and give them to *see as they are seen*, and to *know as they are known.* In the smiles of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying, love, they will there rove, and bask, and brighten, for ever.

III. *I shall consider the Messenger, who published these tidings.*

In the investigation of this subject I shall inquire,

*Who he was;*

*What he became;*

*What he did;* and,

*What he suffered.*

1st. *He was a Person of supreme glory and dignity.*

This divine Person was, from everlasting, underived, independent, all-sufficient, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, goodness, and power. All things were the work of his hand, and lay beneath his feet. At the head of a kingdom, filling immensity and eternity, *he was;* and in comparison with him *there was none else. All nations before him were as nothing; and were counted unto him as less than nothing, and vanity.* Angels in his presence veiled their faces; and Archangels durst not attempt to penetrate the unapproachable light, with which he clothed himself as with a garment. To obey him was their highest honour; to please him was their greatest happiness. In his service they employed all their powers, and found all their transports. Suns lighted up their fires

at his bidding; systems rolled, to fulfil his pleasure; and to accomplish his designs, immensity was stored with worlds, and their inhabitants.

2dly. *He was rich in all good.*

*All things were* not only *made by him*, but *for him*. They were his property; they were destined to fulfil his pleasure. When he looked on all the beauty, greatness, and glory, conspicuous in the beings which compose, and which inhabit, the Universe; He beheld nothing but the works of his own hands, reflecting the boundless beauty, greatness, and glory, which, in forms and varieties infinite, were treasured up from everlasting in his own incomprehensible mind. If he chose to bring into existence any additional number of creatures, to display new forms and varieties of power, wisdom, and goodness, pre-existent in his own perfect intellect, his choice would instantaneously give them being. To the Universe, which he had made, he could with infinite ease add another, and another; and fill with worlds, and suns, and systems, those desolate wilds of immensity, where the wing of Angels never ventured to rove, and whither no created mind ever sent out a solitary thought. Thus the Universe of possible things was his own.

*He was rich in the veneration and good-will, the complacency and gratitude, of all virtuous beings.* Heaven, throughout her vast regions, had from the beginning echoed to his praise. *The Morning-stars* had *sung* his perfections from their birth, *and the Sons of God shouted* his name *for joy*. The everlasting hymn of that exalted and delightful world had ever been, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto our God that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever:* and to this divine ascription every virtuous world had continually, as well as solemnly, answered, *Amen*.

*He was rich in himself.* His own mind was the mansion of all things great, excellent, and delightful. Pure from every stain, free from every error, serene without a cloud, secure beyond a fear, and conscious of wisdom and holiness only, himself was an ocean of eternal and overflowing good.

*He was rich in the complacency of his Father.* He was from everlasting his *beloved Son, in whom he was* ever *well pleased. From everlasting was he by him, as one brought up with him. He was daily his delight, rejoicing alway before him.* In the transcendent communion of the ever-blessed Trinity he experienced enjoyment, which *no* created *eye hath seen, or can see;* and which no mind, less than infinite, can conceive. On this subject beings *of yesterday* must not presume to expatiate. With the deepest reverence, they can only exclaim, *It is higher than heaven, what can we know?*

2dly. *This glorious Person, to accomplish the good, announced in these tidings, became man.*

Although *he was* originally *in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; yet he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness*

*of men.* In this character of immense humiliation, he lived in this sinful, melancholy world. To man, *who is a worm, and the son of man, who is but a worm*, he allied himself by birth, kindred, and character. All the infirmities of our nature, except sin, he voluntarily assumed; sprang from a humble lineage; lived in a humble employment; was united to humble companions; and was invariably in humble circumstances. So depressed was he in all things, that he himself has thought proper to say, *I am a worm and no man.*

3dly. *In this situation he did all things well.*

His life was filled up with usefulness and duty; was laborious beyond example; and was wholly consecrated to the glory of God, and the good of mankind. In conformity to this great purpose, he spent all the former part of his life in an illustrious discharge of the duties of filial piety. In his public ministry, he taught, with unceasing diligence, the Law of God; the ruin of man by his disobedience; and the tidings of his recovery by his own Mediation. The way of life he marked out with an unerring hand: the means of life he disclosed with a benevolent voice. The duties, to which man is summoned, he exemplified in his own perfect conduct. The hopes, which man was invited to cherish, he portrayed in colours of light. The door of heaven, shut before to this Apostate world, he unbarred with his own power; and love invited *labouring and heavy laden* sinners to enter in, and find *rest.* Wandering prodigals, perishing with want and nakedness, and lost to the universe of God, he sought, and found, and brought home to his Father's house rejoicing. Wretches, *dead in trespasses and sins*, he raised to spiritual and immortal life. This vast earthly catacomb he entered; and summoned together by his voice the bones of the immense congregation in its gloomy recesses, *bone to his bone.* The host of skeletons he covered with flesh; and breathing upon them the breath of life, bade them *stand upon their feet, as an exceeding great army for multitude.*

To accomplish this Divine purpose, he underwent every humiliation, and every suffering. He was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger. The greatest part of his life he spent in the humble and laborious business of a mechanic; and literally earned *his bread with the sweat of his brow.* Poor beyond the common lot of poverty, *he had not*, while ministering immortal blessings to a world, a place *where to lay his head.* For all the suffering he wrought miraculous works of beneficence; but the power, with which they were wrought, ready at the call of others, was rarely exerted for himself. At the same time, he was hated, and persecuted day by day. Wickedness employed all its hostility against him; its pride and cunning; its malice and wrath; calumniated his name, invaded his peace, and hunted his life. By his friends he was betrayed and forsaken. By his enemies he was accused of drunkenness and gluttony, of impiety and blasphemy, of being the friend of sinners,

and the coadjutor of Satan. From the agonies of *Gethsemane* he was conveyed successively to the iniquitous tribunal of the Sanhedrim; to the bloody hall of Pilate; to the cross; and to the tomb. At the close of a life, spent in bitterness and sorrow, he consummated all his sufferings, by undergoing that last and greatest of all evils, the wrath of God, poured out upon him as the substitute for sinners.

All these things he foresaw, when he brought these tidings to mankind. They were always before him; and were indispensable parts of that Mediation, which he voluntarily assumed. They were undergone, therefore, in a continual anticipation. Every day *he was* literally, *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* In the full view of them all, he came to this world, to proclaim *peace* and *salvation* to those, who despised, rejected, and persecuted him; who nailed him to the cross, and compelled him to the grave. To these very men he announced all good; himself; his favour; his kingdom; his house; his presence; his everlasting joy. Think what tidings these are. Think to whom they are published.

Thus, from a summary view of this subject, Christ, in publishing these tidings to mankind, appears invested with supreme amiableness and beauty. No attribute, which forms, no action which becomes, the perfect character, is wanting in him. With all things in his hands; with all excellence and enjoyment in his mind; he pitied *us*, miserable worms of the dust; descended from heaven; became man; lived, and died, and rose again; that we might live for ever. With his own voice he proclaimed, in the tidings of the text, the very things, which he has done, and suffered, and the infinite blessings, which in this manner he has purchased for mankind. "There is now," he cries, "*glory to God in the highest*, while there is *peace on earth, and good-will towards men.* In this ruined world, so long enveloped in darkness, so long deformed by sin, so long wasted by misery; where guilt, and sorrow, and suffering, have spread distress without control, and mourning without hope: where war and oppression have ravaged without, and remorse and despair consumed within; where Satan has *exalted his throne above the stars of God*, while its sottish millions have bent before him in religious worship; in this ruined world, where, since the Apostacy, real good was never found, and where tidings of such good were never proclaimed; even here, I announce the tidings of expiated sin; a pardoning God; a renewing Spirit; an opening heaven; and a dawning immortality. Here peace anew shall lift her olive branch over mankind. Here salvation from sin and wo shall anew be found: and here God shall dwell, and reign, the God of *Zion. Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Incline your ear, and hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because*

*he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a Bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments; as a Bride adorneth herself with jewels.*"

Every Messenger of good news is, of course, desirable and lovely in the eyes of those, who are deeply interested; and a part of that lustre, belonging to the tidings themselves, is by a natural association diffused around him, by whom they are borne: especially because he is regarded as voluntarily announcing good to us, and as rejoicing in our joy. How glorious, how lovely, then, does Christ appear, when coming with all the inherent splendour and beauty of his character, and the transcendent dignity of his station, to proclaim to us tidings infinitely desirable, of good infinitely necessary and infinitely great! Men to him were wholly unnecessary. Had all their millions been blotted out of the kingdom of God; they would not even have left a blank in the creation. With a word he could have formed, of the stones of the street, other millions, wiser, better, and happier; more dutiful, and more desirable. How divinely amiable does he appear, when the tidings, which he brings, are tidings of his own arduous labours on our behalf, and of his own unexampled sufferings: labours and sufferings, without which good tidings could never have reached us, and real good never been found in this miserable world! How divinely amiable does he appear, when, notwithstanding the apostacy and guilt of the race of *Adam*, he came, of his own accord, to publish these tidings of immortal good to rebels and enemies; and while proclaiming them, *rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth*, and found *his delights with the sons of men!*

What, then, must be the guilt, what the debasement, of those, who are regardless of the glorious declarations, hostile to the benevolent designs, and insensible to the perfect character, of this Divine herald! How blind, and deaf, and stupid, must they be to all that is beautiful, engaging, and lovely! How grovelling must be their moral taste! How wonderful their neglect of their own well-being! How evidently is their ingratitude *as the sin of witchcraft, and their stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry!* Were these tidings to be proclaimed in hell itself; one can scarcely fail to imagine, that all the malice, impiety, and blasphemy, in that dreary world, would be suspended; that fiends would cease to conflict with fiends; that sorrow would dry the stream of never-ending tears; that remorse would reverse, and blunt, his stings; that Despair would lift up his pale front with a commencing smile; that the prisoners of wrath, (then *prisoners of hope*) would shake their chains with transport; and that all the gloomy caverns would echo to the sounds of gratitude and joy. In our own world, once equally

hopeless, these tidings are actually proclaimed. What must be the spirit of those, who refuse to hear?

But, O ye followers of the Divine and compassionate Saviour; infinitely different is the wisdom, displayed by you! When this Divine Messenger proclaims to you peace and salvation; when he informs you that he has died, that you may live; when he demands of you cordially to embrace his atonement, and accept his intercession, you cheerfully hear, believe, and obey. Conscious of your own guilty character, and ruined condition, you have yielded yourselves to him, with all the heart, in the humble, amiable, penitent, exercise of faith and love; and finally chosen him as your own Saviour. On your minds his image is instamped; in your life his beauty shines with real, though feeble, radiance: in your character his loveliness is begun: in your souls his immortality is formed. On you his Father smiles, a forgiving God. On you his Spirit descends with his sanctifying and dove-like influence. To you his word unfolds all his promises; his daily favour; his everlasting love. To you hell is barred; and all its seducing and destroying inhabitants confined in chains. Heaven for you has already *opened* its *everlasting doors; and the King of glory* has *entered in, to prepare a place for you.* The joy of that happy world has been already renewed over your repentance. The Spirit of truth conducts you daily onward in your journey through life, and in your way towards your final home. Death, your last enemy, is to you deprived of his strength and sting; and the grave despoiled of its victory. Your bodies will soon *be sown in* the *corruption, weakness, and dishonour* of your present perishable nature, to be *raised in* the *incorruption, power, and glory,* of immortality. Your souls, cleansed from every sin, and stain, and weakness, this Divine Messenger will present before the throne of his Father *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;* to be acquitted, approved, and blessed. In the world of light, and peace, and joy, enlarged with knowledge, and refined with evangelical virtue, he will unite you *to the general assembly of the first-born,* and *to the innumerable company of Angels;* will make you *sons, and priests, and kings to God,* and cause you to *live, and reign, with him for ever and ever. All things* will then be *yours; you will be Christ's;* and *Christ will be God's.* Anticipate, and by anticipation enjoy to the full, this divine assemblage of blessings; they are your birth-right. But, while you enjoy them, deeply pity, and fervently pray for, your foolish, guilty, and miserable companions.

# SERMON LXIV.

## CONSEQUENCES OF CHRIST'S MEDIATION.

### JUSTIFICATION.——JUSTIFICATION BY THE FREE GRACE OF GOD.

ROMANS iii. 24.—*Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus.*

IN the series of sermons, which I have preached hitherto, as part of a system of Theology, I have considered *the Existence and Perfections of God; the Disobedience and Apostacy of Man; and the Impossibility of his justification by his own righteousness; the Covenant of Redemption, made between the Father and the Son; the Character, Mediation, and Offices, of Christ. The former class of subjects* constitutes what is frequently called *the Religion of Nature; the latter*, the *first branches of the Christian, Remedial system*, grafted upon that religion. Perfect beings are justified by their own obedience; since they fulfil all the demands of the divine law. To them, therefore, the religion of nature is amply sufficient to secure their duty, their acceptance with God, and their final happiness. Sinful beings cannot thus be justified; because they have not rendered that obedience, which is the only possible ground of justification by Law. Of course, some other ground of justification is absolutely necessary for them, if they are ever to be accepted, or rewarded. For this the religion of Christ professes to have made ample provision. In my examination of the Character and Offices of Christ, I have attempted to show, that he has taught all which is necessary to be known, believed, or done, by us, in order to our acceptance with God; and has accomplished the expiation of our sins in such a manner, that God, in justifying us, may be just to himself, and to the Universe. Thus far, it is hoped, the way to our return from our Apostacy has been made clear and satisfactory.

The next great question, to be asked, and a question of infinite moment to every one of us, is, *In what manner do we become interested in the Mediation of Christ, and entitled to the glorious blessings which he has purchased for man?* This question is partially answered in *the text*. Here we are said to be *justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption of Christ Jesus*. In this declaration, our justification is immediately connected with *the redemption of Christ*, as *its meritorious, or procuring, cause*. *The source* of it, also, on the part of God, is directly asserted: as is also, *the manner, in which it is accomplished*. We are said to *be justified*

*freely;* and *justified by his grace.* All this is, also, said to be done *through*, by means of, or on account of, *the redemption of Christ.* These subjects are intended to occupy the following discourse.

In the course of my investigation I shall consider,

I. *In what sense mankind are justified under the Gospel.*

II. *In what sense we are freely justified by the grace of God.*

I. *I shall consider in what sense mankind are justified under the Gospel.*

The word *justify*, as I observed in a former discourse, is taken from the business of judicial courts; and denotes *the acquittal of a person, tried by such a court, upon an accusation of a crime. The person, accused*, being upon trial found innocent of the charge, *is declared to be just, in the view of the Law;* and, by an easy and natural figure, is said *to be justified;* that is, *made just.* In this original, forensic sense of the term, it is obvious from what has been said in a former discourse, that no human being can be justified by the law, or before the bar, of God. As all mankind have disobeyed this Law; it is clear, that he, *whose judgment is* invariably *according to truth*, must declare them guilty.

Still the Scriptures abundantly teach us, that, *what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for a sin-offering*, has, by thus *condemning sin in the flesh*, accomplished for multitudes of our sinful race. It is, however, certain, that justification, when extended to returning sinners, must, in some respects, be, of course, a thing widely different from justification under the Law. A subject of law is justified only when he is in the full and strict sense just: that is, when he has completely obeyed all the requisitions of the law. In this case, his obedience is the only ground of his justification: and is all that is necessary to it; because he has done every thing, which was required of him; and no act of disobedience can be truly laid to his charge. From this case, that of the penitent, under the Gospel, differs entirely. *He* has been guilty of innumerable acts of disobedience; and has not fulfilled the demands of the Law, even in a single instance. All these acts of disobedience are truly chargeable to him, when he comes before the Bar of God at the final trial; nor can he ever be truly said not to have been guilty of them. If, therefore, he be ever justified; it must be in a widely different sense from that, which has been already explained. The term is, therefore, not used in the Gospel because its original meaning is intended here; but because this term, figuratively used, better expresses the thing intended, than any other. *The act of God, denoted by this term as used in the Gospel*, so much resembles a forensic justification, or justification by law, that *the word is naturally*, and by an easy translation, *adopted to express this act.*

The justification of a sinner under the Gospel, consists in the *three following things: Pardoning his sins; Acquitting him from the pun-*

*ishment which they have deserved; and entitling him to the rewards, or blessings, due by Law to perfect obedience only.*

In order to form clear and satisfactory views of this subject, it will be useful to examine the situation of man, in his progress from apostacy to acceptance, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures.

In the covenant of redemption, the Father promised Christ, that, *if he should make his soul a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, he should see a seed, which should prolong their days:** Or, as it is expressed by God in the 89th Psalm, *His seed should endure for ever, and his throne*, that is, his dominion over them, *as the days of Heaven.* In this covenant, *three things* are promised to Christ, in consequence of his assumption, and execution, of the Mediatorial office: 1st, *That a seed shall be given him;* 2d, *That they shall endure and be happy for ever;* and 3d, *That his dominion over them shall be co-extended with their eternal being.* It was, then, certain, antecedently to Christ's entrance upon the office of Mediator, that he should not assume, nor execute, it in vain; but should receive a reward for all his labours and sufferings; such as he thought a sufficient one; such as induced him to undertake this office, and to accomplish all the arduous duties which it involved. This reward was to be formed of rational and immortal beings, originally apostate, but redeemed by him from their apostacy, through the atonement, made for their sins by his sufferings; particularly his death; and the honour, which he rendered to the divine law by his personal obedience. All these redeemed apostates were to *endure for ever* in a state of perfect holiness and happiness; and both this holiness and happiness were to be for ever progressive, under his perfectly wise and benevolent administration.

In this covenant, then, it is promised, that the persons here spoken of, and elsewhere declared to be *a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues*, should be *the seed*, the children of Christ; his property; and that not only in a peculiar, but in a singular sense; not only created by him, as all other intelligent beings were, but redeemed by him also; and that at the expense of his own life.

The least consideration, however, will clearly show us, that sinners can never become Christ's in any such sense, as to be accepted by him, unless they are delivered from the sentence of condemnation, pronounced against them by the law of God. This law, I have formerly had occasion to observe, is unalterable. It is in itself perfect; and cannot be made better. God, the perfect and unchangeable Being, cannot, without denying his perfection, consent to make it worse. Besides, He has declared, that the Universe *shall sooner pass away, than one jot, or one tittle, of the Law shall pass, until all shall be fulfilled.* Yet if this sentence be universally executed, the reward, promised to Christ in the covenant of re-

* Isaiah liii. 10. Lowth.

demption, viz. the immortal holiness and happiness of those, who in that covenant were promised to him as his seed, must of necessity fail. This sentence, therefore, will not be universally executed, because such an execution *would render the promise of God of none effect.*

Further; all who are involved in the execution of this sentence will not only suffer, but also sin for ever. But no words are necessary to prove, that a collection of sinners, continuing to sin for ever, could in no sense constitute a reward to Christ, for his labours and sufferings, in the work of redemption. From them he could receive neither love, gratitude, nor praise. In their character he could see nothing amiable, nothing to excite his complacency. In his government of them, his goodness and mercy would find no employment, and achieve no glory. Nor could they ever *be his* in the sense of the covenant of redemption.

Thus it is beyond a doubt evident, that, with regard to all those who are thus promised to Christ, the sentence of the Divine Law will not, and cannot, be executed; and that, when they appear at their final trial, they will be acquitted from the punishment due to their sins, and delivered from the moral turpitude of their character. All this is plainly indispensable to the fulfilment of the covenant of redemption. Accordingly, we find it all promised in the most definite manner, wherever the subject is mentioned in the Gospel.

The first step, in the final fulfilment of the promises, contained in this covenant, towards those who are the seed of Christ, is *the pardon of their sins.* Sin, until it is pardoned, is still charged to the sinner's account. Hence, he is, in this situation, exposed to the punishment which it has deserved. The pardon of sin is, of course, attended by the exemption of the sinner from punishment; so much of course, that these things are usually considered as but one. They are, however, separable, not only in thought, but in fact. We do not always, nor necessarily punish offenders, whom we still do not forgive. The offender may have merited, and may continue to merit, punishment; and yet sufficient reasons may exist, why he should not be punished, although they are not derived from his moral character. Forgiveness, in the full sense, supposes the offender penitent; and includes an approbation of his character as such, and a reconciliation to him of the person who forgives. But these things are not involved in a mere determination to exempt an offender from punishment. On the part of God, however, in his conduct towards returning sinners, these things are not, I confess, separable in fact.

But the sinner might be forgiven, and acquitted from the punishment due to his sins; and yet not be rendered the subject of future blessings: much less of the blessings, promised in the covenant of redemption. He might be annihilated. He might be placed in a state of happiness imperfect, and mixed, like that of

the present world; or he might be placed in a state of happiness unmixed and perfect, and yet greatly inferior to that, which will be actually enjoyed by the penitent children of *Adam*. Another step, therefore, indispensable to the complete fulfilment of the covenant of redemption, is entitling them to the very blessings, which are here promised: viz. *the blessings of heaven:* the first blessings, as I may hereafter have occasion to show, in the kingdom of God.

These three things, which I have specified, as being involved in the justification of mankind, are all clearly included, and promised in the covenant of redemption: and the connexion of them, or of our justification, with that work, as the only foundation on which our justification can rest, is, I think, too manifest from what has been said, to be doubted.

Having thus stated what I intend by *justification under the Gospel*, I shall inquire,

II. *In what sense we are said to be justified freely by the grace of God.*

From what has been said in a former discourse, concerning the impossibility of justification by our own obedience, it is, I trust, evident, that our justification can in no sense nor degree, be said with truth, to be merited by ourselves. In this respect, therefore, if it exist at all, it must of necessity be communicated freely. It will, however, be necessary to a satisfactory explanation of this subject, to examine it particularly; so as to prevent any misconception concerning its nature; and so as to obviate any objections, which may arise in the minds of those who hear me. To this examination it will be indispensable, that I settle, in the beginning, *the meaning, which I annex to the term, Grace*, on which the import of the proposition depends.

The word *Grace*, is used by the inspired writers in various senses.

1st. *It denotes a free gift;* which was, perhaps, its original meaning:

2dly. *The free, sovereign love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, the source of every such gift from God:

3dly. *The efficacious power of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of mankind:* 2 Corinthians xii. 9.

4thly. *That state of reconciliation with God, which is enjoyed by Christians:* Romans v. 2.

5thly. *Any virtue of the Christian character:* and,

6thly. *Any particular favour, communicated by God:* Eph. iii. 8.

Beside this, in common use it denotes *gracefulness of person, deportment, or character.*

In the text, it is manifestly used in *the second sense;* and denotes *the free, sovereign love of God; the source of all our benefits.*

That *we are justified freely by the grace of God*, thus understood, I will now attempt to show by the following considerations:

1st. *Under the influence, or in the indulgence, of this Love, God formed the original design of saving mankind.*

The law of God is a perfectly just law. But by this law man was condemned, and finally cast off. Justice, therefore, in no sense demanded the deliverance of mankind from condemnation. Of course, this deliverance was proposed, and planned, by the mere sovereign mercy of God.

2dly. *The covenant of redemption was the result of the same mercy.*

In this covenant, God promised to Christ the eternal happiness of all his seed; that is, his followers. Now it is certain, that no one of these obeyed the law of God. This was certainly foreknown by God; and with this foreknowledge he was pleased to promise this glorious blessing concerning creatures, who were only rebels and apostates, and who merited nothing but wrath and indignation. Sovereign love, only, could operate in favour of such beings as these.

3dly. *The same Divine disposition executed the work of redemption.*

When Christ *came to his own; his own received him not.* On the contrary, they hated, opposed, and persecuted him through his life; and, with a spirit still more malignant and furious, put him to death.

The very same spirit is inherent in the nature of all men. We ourselves, who condemn the *Jews* as Murderers, still with the same pertinacity reject the Saviour. We neither believe, nor obey; we neither repent of our sins, nor forsake them; we neither receive his instructions, nor walk in his ordinances. Opposed to him in our hearts, we are opposed to him, also, in our lives.

The same opposition prevails in the whole race of *Adam*. Nor is there recorded on the page of history, a single known instance, in which it may be believed, even with remote probability, that man, from mere native propensity, or an original goodness of heart, has cordially accepted Christ. Certainly, nothing but the sovereign love of God could accomplish such a work, as that of redemption, for beings of this character.

4thly. *The Mission and Agency of the Divine Spirit were the result of this love only.*

In the human character there is nothing to merit the interference of this glorious person on the behalf of mankind. Christ *came to seek, and to* redeem, man, because he *was lost*. The Divine spirit came to sanctify him, because without sanctification he was undone. This, the very fact of his regeneration unanswerably proves. Regeneration is the commencement of virtue in the soul. *Without* evangelical *love*, says St. *Paul*, *I am nothing*: that is, I am nothing in the kingdom of God: I have no spiritual or virtuous existence. From the necessity of regeneration, then, to man; and the fact, that he is regenerated; it is certain, that there is nothing

in his nature, except his miserable condition, which could be an inducement to the Spirit of Grace to interfere in human concerns.

What is true of *this act* of the Divine Spirit, is equally true of *his agency in enlightening, quickening, purifying, and strengthening, man in the Christian course, and conducting him finally to heaven.*

5thly. *As all these steps*, so plainly necessary to the justification of man, are the result of the unmerited love of God; so his justification itself flows entirely from the same love.

Christ in his sufferings and death made a complete atonement for the sins of mankind. In other words, he rendered to the law, character, and government, of God, such peculiar honour, as to make it consistent with their unchangeable nature and glory, that sinners should, on the proper conditions, be forgiven. But the atonement inferred no obligation of justice, on the part of God, to forgive them. They were still sinners, after the atonement, in the same sense, and in the same degree, as before. In no degree were they less guilty, or less deserving of punishment.

The supposition, incautiously admitted by some divines, that Christ satisfied the demands of the law by his active and passive obedience, in the same manner as the payment of a debt satisfies the demands of a creditor, has, if I mistake not, been heretofore proved to be unfounded in the Scriptures. We owed God our obedience, and not our property; and obedience in its own nature is due from the subject himself, and can never be rendered by another. In refusing to render it, we are criminal; and for this criminality merit punishment. The guilt, thus incurred, is inherent in the criminal himself, and cannot in the nature of things be transferred to another. All that, in this case, can be done by a substitute, of whatever character, is to render it not improper for the Lawgiver to pardon the transgressor. No substitute can, by any possible effort, make him cease to be guilty, or to deserve punishment. This (and I intend to say it with becoming reverence) is beyond the ability of Omnipotence itself. The fact, that he is guilty, is past; and can never be recalled.

Thus it is evident, that the sinner, when he comes before God, comes in the character of a sinner only; and must, if strict justice be done, be therefore condemned. If he escape condemnation, then, he can derive *these blessings* from mercy only, and in no degree from Justice. In other words, every blessing, which he receives, is a free gift. The pardon of his sins, his acquittal from condemnation, and his admission to the enjoyments of heaven, are all given to him freely, and graciously, because God regards him with infinite compassion, and is therefore pleased to communicate to him these unspeakable favours.

Should it be said, *that God has promised these blessings to the penitent, in the covenant of redemption, made with Christ, and in the covenant of grace, made with the penitent; and has thus brought*

*himself under obligation to bestow them:* I answer, that this is indeed true, but that it affects not the doctrine. The *promise, made in these covenants, is a gracious promise*, originated by the Divine compassion. Certainly, this procedure on the part of God, is not the less free, or gracious, because he was pleased to publish his own merciful design of accepting penitent sinners, and to confirm it to them by a voluntary promise. As I have already remarked, every part of the Divine conduct towards the sinner, every spiritual blessing which the sinner receives, antecedently to his justification, is the result of grace only, or a sovereign love. These preceding acts, therefore, being themselves absolutely gracious, can never render the act of justifying the sinner the less gracious, or render him the meritorious object of that justification, to which he could never have been entitled, but by means of these preceding acts of grace. The promise of justification was made, not to a meritorious being, but to a sinner; a guilty, miserable rebel, exposed by his rebellion to final perdition. The fulfilment of this promise is an act equally gracious with that of making the promise itself.

Should it be said, *that the sinner is renewed, antecedently to his justification; and, having thus become a holy or virtuous being, has also become either wholly, or partially, a meritorious object of justification:* I answer, that the Law of God condemns the sinner to death for the first transgression. Now it will not be said, that the sanctified sinner is not chargeable with many transgressions; the guilt of which still lies at his door, and for which he may *now* be justly condemned, notwithstanding his repentance. This, it is believed, was made abundantly evident in a former discourse concerning the impossibility of justification by our own obedience. The sinner therefore, although sanctified, still deserves the wrath of God for all his transgressions; and, according to the sentence of the Law, must, if considered only as he is in himself, be finally punished.

*That the penitent* is *not partially justified on account of his own merit after he is sanctified*, must, I think, be acknowledged, if we attend to the following considerations.

1st. *It will be admitted, that all those, who are sanctified, are also justified.*

*Whom he called, them he also justified:* that is, he justified all those, whom he *called effectually, or sanctified.* But it will not be denied, that some persons are *sanctified on a dying bed;* when they have no opportunity to perform any works of righteousness, which might be the ground of their justification. The case of *the penitent thief* will, I suppose, be generally acknowledged to be substantially of this nature. It will not be denied, that some persons are *sanctified from the womb;* as were *Jeremiah* and *John the Baptist;* nor that, of these, some die, antecedently to that period of life, when they become capable of direct acts of moral good and evil. The children of believing parents, dedicated to God, and dying in their

infancy, will, I suppose, be allowed to be, universally, instances of this kind. Concerning all the instances, which exist, of both these classes, it must be acknowledged, that without exception they are the subjects of justification; and that they are *in no sense* justified on account of their own righteousness; but *solely* by the free grace of God, on account of the righteousness of Christ. If, then, others are justified partially, on account of their own righteousness; justification is given to some of mankind on *one ground*, or procuring cause, and to others *on another, and very different ground*. But no such doctrine is any where taught, or even hinted at, in the Scriptures; and I presume, that no intelligent man, acquainted with them, will pretend, that any such diversity exists in the justification of mankind.

2dly. *The Scriptures no where teach us, that we are justified partly on account of our own righteousness, and partly on account of the righteousness of Christ.*

St. *Paul*, in the 27th verse of the context, pursuing the subject of justification by the free grace of God, says, *Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what Law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.* Here we are taught, that all boasting is absolutely excluded; and that it is excluded, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith. But the same Apostle says, that *to him that worketh the reward is reckoned, not of grace, but of debt:* that is, the reward of justification and its consequences *would be due to him*, who received it on account of his works. He, then, certainly *might boast:* that is, he might truly say, that he had merited justification by his own works. If he had merited justification *partly* by his own works, he can truly boast of having merited that part of his justification. *Boasting*, therefore, *cannot*, on this plan of justification, *be excluded*. Yet the Apostle elsewhere teaches us, that it was one end of the system of redemption, as established by God, *that no flesh should glory in his presence*, but that *he who glorieth*, should *glory only in Christ*. 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

Besides, it is incredible, if this doctrine be true, that no mention of it should be made in the Scriptures. I know of no passage in the Scriptures, so much relied on by its abettors, as the discourse of St. *James* in the 2d Chapter of his Epistle. In a future discourse I design to examine the account, given of this subject by St. James; and expect to show, that he furnishes no support to it. Should I succeed in this expectation, it will probably be admitted by those who hear me, that the doctrine finds no countenance in the Scriptures, and must therefore be given up.

3dly. *The works of the best men never fulfil the demands of the Law; and therefore cannot be the ground, either wholly, or partially, of their justification.*

In the conclusion of the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, St. *Paul describes his own state, as it was when he wrote this Epistle;* or, generally, *after his conversion*. As this assertion has

been doubted; and as respectable Divines have supposed this discourse *to be an account of St. Paul's state before he was converted;* I shall attempt to prove the truth of my assertion. This I shall do, very summarily, in *the three following remarks.*

1st. *St. Paul observes*, verse 22d, *I delight in the law of God, after the inward man.* This assertion was never true of any man, antecedently to his regeneration. St. *Paul* does not say, that *he approves of the law of God.* This would have been a declaration concerning his *reason*, or his *conscience.* But he says, *I delight in the Law of God.* This is a declaration concerning his *feelings; his heart.* The *heart* of an unregenerate man never yet delighted in the Divine Law.

2dly. In the 24th verse, he exclaims, *O wretched man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

From this exclamation it is certain, that the evil, from which St. *Paul* so passionately wished a deliverance, was *existing at the time when the passage was written.* But at the time when the passage was written, St. *Paul* had been a convert many years. The evil existed, therefore, after his conversion.

3dly. *In the 25th verse, he says, So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God.*

This assertion could never be truly made concerning any unregenerate man. *The mind of every such man*, we know from the mouth of the same Apostle, *is enmity against God; not subject to his Law, neither indeed can be.*

The account given by St. *Paul* of himself in this chapter, is, then, *an account of his moral state, at the time when the chapter was written.* As St. Paul in all probability was inferior to no other mere man, in moral excellence; he may be justly considered as having given us, here, a description of Christians in their very best state.

But, if in this state *there is a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin, which is in their members;* if *when they would do good, evil is present with them;* so that *the good which they would they do not; and the evil which they would not they do;* how plain is it, that, instead of meriting justification by their works, they daily violate the law of God, provoke his anger, expose themselves to condemnation, and stand in infinite need of the intercession of Christ, and the pardon of their sins, in order to their salvation!

Besides, the very best actions of regenerated men are imperfect; and fall short of the demands of the Law. This position is so rarely contested, that I need not here allege arguments, to evince its truth. But it cannot be pretended, that an obedience, which does not even answer the demands of the Law in any case, but is invariably defective, and therefore in some degree sinful, can be the ground of justification to any man.

I have now finished the observations, which I intended concerning this subject. If I mistake not, they furnish ample proof, that *we*

*are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.* A few remarks shall conclude the discourse.

## REMARKS.

1st. *From what has been said it is evident, that the salvation of mankind is a glorious exhibition of the character, and particularly of the Benevolence, of God.*

On this subject I cannot dwell; and shall only observe summarily, that the work of our salvation was contrived, and accomplished, by God alone: that the means, by which it was accomplished, viz. the Mediation of Christ, and the mission and agency of the Holy Ghost, far from lessening, only enhance, our conceptions of the Divine Benevolence, displayed in this work: that the good-will, manifested in doing any thing, is ever proportioned to the efforts, which are made: that, in the present case, the efforts, actually made, are the most wonderful, which have been disclosed to the Universe; and that they, therefore, discover the good-will of the Creator to mankind, in a manner, and in a degree, wholly unexampled.

All this, at the same time, was done for beings entirely unnecessary to God. In himself, therefore; in his own compassion; must have existed, the originating, powerful, and productive cause of this wonderful event. What must have been the good-will of Him, who sent his Son *to seek, and to save, that which was lost;* and to *become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,* that sinners and rebels might live?

2dly. *The Socinian objection against the doctrine of the Atonement, that it is opposed to the Scriptural account of the exercise of grace in our justification, is here seen to be groundless.*

If the observations, made in this discourse, are true; the doctrine of the atonement, instead of lessening, or destroying, the exercise of grace in our justification, only renders this act of God more eminently gracious. If all these things, which have been mentioned, particularly the atonement of Christ, were necessary to be done, in order to the salvation of mankind, the mercy, which resolved on them all, is far more strongly displayed, than if nothing more had been necessary, than barely to forgive the sinner.

3dly. *If God be thus merciful, all the declarations of his mercy ought to be believed by us.*

The disposition, which could contrive, and execute, these things, of its own mere choice; without any reward; without any expectation of any reward; for beings equally undeserving, and unnecessary; can do all things, which are kind, and proper to be done. Especially can this disposition carry the things, which it has contrived, and begun, into complete execution. To do this is its own natural bent; the mere progress of its inherent propensities. The declarations therefore, which manifest the determination of him, in

whom this disposition resides, to accomplish all things pertaining to this work, ought cordially, as well as entirely, to be believed. To distrust them is equally absurd, and guilty: absurd, because they are supported by the most abundant evidence; guilty, because the distrust springs from the heart, and not from the understanding.

Why should God be disbelieved, when he declares, that *he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner?* or when he proclaims, *Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely?* If he had wished to punish mankind, for the gratification of his own views, or pleasure, could he not have done it with infinite ease? To him it was certainly unnecessary to announce the forgiveness of sin; to send his Son to die, or to give his Spirit, and his Word, to sanctify, and save. This immense preparation depended solely on his own mere pleasure. He might have suffered the law to take its course. He might have annihilated, or punished for ever, the whole race of Adam; and with a command have raised up a new and better world of beings in their stead. Men are in no sense necessary to God. He might have filled the Universe with Angels at once; perfect, obedient, excellent, and glorious beings; and been loved, praised, and obeyed, by them for ever. Why then, but because he was desirous to save poor, guilty, perishing men, did he enter upon the work of their salvation? Why did he give his Son, to redeem them? Why did he send his Spirit, to sanctify them? Why did he proclaim *glad tidings of great joy unto all people?* Why does he wait with infinite patience, why has he always waited, to be gracious; amid all the provocations, and sins, of this polluted world? Why are the calls of mercy, after being so long, and so extensively, rejected with scorn and insult, repeated through one age after another? Why, after all *our* unbelief, are they repeated to us? Why are we, after all our transgressions, assembled, this day, to hear them? The true, the only, answer is; God is infinitely kind, merciful, and willing *to save to the uttermost.*

Let, then, this glorious Being be believed without distrust: without delay. Let every sinner boldly come to the throne of grace; to the door of life; and be assured, that, if he desires sincerely to enter, he will not be shut out.

# SERMON LXV.

JUSTIFICATION.—THE DUTY OF BELIEVING.

ROMANS iii. 28—*Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law:*

MORE CORRECTLY RENDERED,

*Therefore we conclude, that Man is justified by faith, without works of Law.*

IN the last discourse, I attempted to show, that *in consequence of the redemption of Christ, Man is justified freely by the grace of God.* The grace of God is *the source, the moving cause*, of this blessing to mankind. The next subject of consideration, before us, is *the Means, by which man, in the economy of redemption, becomes entitled to this blessing.* These, in the text, are summed up in the single article, *Faith;* which is here declared to be the instrument of justification. *To elucidate this truth* is the design, with which I have selected the present theme of discourse.

But before I enter upon the doctrine in form, it will be necessary to remind you, that an *Objection* is raised against it at the threshold; which, if founded in truth, would seem to overthrow it at once. It is this: *that faith is so far from being of a moral nature, as to be necessary, and unavoidable: man being absolutely passive in believing, and under a physical impossibility of doing otherwise than he actually does; whether in believing, or disbelieving. Of course*, it is further urged, *An attribute, governed wholly by physical necessity, can never recommend us to God; much less become the ground of so important a blessing, as justification.*

It will be easily seen that, so long as this objection has its hold on the mind, and is allowed its full import, the doctrine of justification by faith can never be received, unless in a very imperfect and unsatisfactory manner. If faith is a thing, over which we have no control; if we believe only under the influence of a physical necessity, and, whether we believe or disbelieve, it is physically impossible for us to do otherwise; then it is plain, that Faith is so far from being praiseworthy, amiable, and capable of recommending us to God, as to merit and sustain no moral character at all. According to this scheme, therefore, faith and unbelief, being equally and absolutely involuntary and unavoidable, can never constitute a moral distinction between men. Faith can never be an object of the approbation; nor unbelief of the disapprobation of God. Much less can we be praiseworthy in believing, or blameable in disbelieving. Still less can we on one of these grounds be rewarded, and on the other punished. Least of all can we,

in consequence of our faith, be accepted, and blessed *for ever;* and, in consequence of our unbelief, be rejected, and punished with *endless* misery.

All these things, however, are directly and palpably contradictory to the whole tenour of the Gospel. In *this*, faith is approved, commanded, and promised an eternal reward. Unbelief, on the contrary, is censured, forbidden, and threatened with an everlasting punishment. Faith, therefore, is the hinge, on which the whole evangelical system turns. *If ye believe not that I am he; ye shall die in your sins; He, that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not, shall not see life;* are declarations, which, while they cannot be mistaken, teach us, that all the future interests of man are suspended on his faith; and are, at the same time, declarations, to which the whole Evangelical system is exactly conformed. If, then, our faith and disbelief are altogether involuntary, and the effect of mere physical necessity; God has annexed everlasting life and everlasting death, not to any moral character in man, but to the mere result of physical causes. A consequence so monstrous ought certainly not to be admitted. The Scriptures, therefore, must be given up, if this scheme is true.

I have now, I presume, shown it to be necessary, that, before I enter upon the discussion of the doctrine, contained in the text, *this objection should be thoroughly examined, and removed. To do this, will be the business of the present discourse.*

In opposition to this objection, then, I assert, *that Faith, and its opposite, disbelief, are, in all moral cases, voluntary exercises of the mind; are proper objects of commands and prohibitions; and proper foundations of praise and blame, reward and punishment.* This doctrine I shall endeavour to prove by the following arguments; derived both from Reason and Revelation; because the objection, which I have been opposing, has been incautiously admitted, at times, by Christians, as well as openly, and triumphantly, alleged by Infidels.

1st. *Faith is every where commanded in the Scriptures.*

*This is his commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.* 1 John iii. 23. *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled; and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.* Mark i. 14, 15. In these two passages, we have *the command to believe the Gospel*, delivered by Christ in form; *and the declaration of the Evangelist, that it is the commandment of God, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* Whatever, then, we understand by faith; it is the object of a command, or law, which God has given to mankind; a thing, which may be justly required, and of course a thing, which they are able to render as an act of obedience, at least in some circumstances. God cannot require what man is not physically able to perform. But all obedience to God is volunta-

ry. Nothing is, or can be, demanded by him, which is not in its nature voluntary; nor can any thing, but the will of Intelligent beings, be the object of moral law. No man will say, that a brute, a stone, or a stream, can be the object of such law. Faith therefore, being in the most express terms required by a law, or command, of God, must of course be a voluntary exercise of the mind, in such a sense, that it can be rightfully required.

Further; the language of the *first* of these passages most evidently denotes, that *the command to believe on the name of Jesus Christ is one of peculiar and pre-eminent importance. This is his commandment:* as if there were no other; or no other, which in its importance may be compared with this. Here St. *John* teaches us, that faith is pre-eminently required by God, in a manner distinct from that, in which he requires other acts of obedience generally. Of course, faith is not only justly required of mankind by God; but is required in a manner more solemn, than many other acts, universally acknowledged to be voluntary.

Accordingly, a peculiar sanction is annexed to the law, requiring our faith. *He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.*

The reward and the penalty, here announced, are the highest which exist in the Universe; and, therefore, directly indicate the obedience and the disobedience to be of supreme import. Nothing can be a stronger proof, that, in the eye of God, faith and unbelief are voluntary, or moral exercises of man.

But it may be alleged, *that the faith, enjoined in these commands, is not a mere speculative belief; and, therefore, not the faith, which, in the general objection opposed by me, is asserted to be physically necessary and involuntary.* I readily agree, that the faith, here enjoined, is saving faith; and that this is not mere speculative belief. But such a belief is an indispensable part of saving faith; and so absolutely inseparable from it, that without such belief saving faith cannot exist. *Saving faith is always a speculative belief, joined with a cordial consent to the truth, and a cordial approbation of the object, which that truth respects.* When, therefore, saving faith is commanded; speculative belief, which is an inseparable part of it, is also commanded. *It is not*, indeed, *required to exist by itself; or to be rendered without the accordance of the heart.* But, whenever saving faith is required, speculative belief is absolutely required. Of course speculative belief is, at least in some degree, in our power; and may be rendered as an act of obedience to God.

To him who believes in the inspiration of the Scriptures, these passages, and many others like them, furnish complete proof, that faith, whether saving or speculative, is an act of the mind, which is in such a sense voluntary, as to be the proper object of a command, or law; that it may be justly required of mankind; and that it cannot be either refused or neglected without guilt.

2dly. *The universal consent of mankind furnishes ample proof that faith is, in many instances, a voluntary, or moral exercise.*

The evidence which I propose to derive from this source, lies in the following general truth: *That in all cases, where mankind have sufficient opportunity thoroughly to understand any subject, and are under no inducement to judge with partiality, their universal judgment is right.* As I presume this truth will not be doubted; I shall not attempt to illustrate it by any arguments. That the present case is included within this general truth is certain. Every man, who thinks, at all, knows by his own personal experience, and by his daily intercourse with other men, whether his own faith, and their's, be voluntary in many instances, or not; I say, *in many instances;* because, if the assertion be admitted with this limitation, it will be sufficient for my purpose. If, then, mankind have determined, that faith is sometimes voluntary, the doctrine, against which I contend, must be given up.

The language of mankind very frequently expresses their real views in a manner, much more exactly accordant with truth, than their Philosophical discussions. Men make *words*, only when they have *ideas to be expressed by those words, and just such ideas, as the words are formed to express.* If, then, we find words in any language, denoting any ideas whatever, we know with certainty, that such ideas have existed in the minds of those, by whom the words were used. Whenever these ideas have been derived from experience and observation, we also know, that they are real, and not fantastical; and are founded, not in imagination, but in fact. In all languages, are found words, denoting the same things with the English terms, *candour, fairness, reasonableness, impartiality, and others, generally of the like import.* The meaning of all these terms is clearly of this nature: that the persons, to whom they are justly applied, use their faculties in collecting, weighing, and admitting, evidence, in a manner equitable and praiseworthy. Accordingly, all persons, who do this, are highly esteemed, and greatly commended, as exhibiting no small excellence of moral character.

In all languages, also, there are words, answering to the English words, *prejudice, partiality, unreasonableness,* and *unfairness.* By these terms, when applied to this subject, we uniformly denote a voluntary employment of our faculties in collecting, weighing, and admitting evidence, conducted in a manner inequitable and blameworthy. Accordingly, persons, to whom these terms are justly applied, that is, the very persons who employ their faculties in this manner, are universally disesteemed, and condemned, as guilty and odious.

All these words were formed to express ideas, really existing in the human mind; and ideas, derived from experience and observation. Of course, these ideas have a real foundation in nature, and fact; and the words express that which is real.

As the terms which I have mentioned, are parts of the customary language of a great nation; and as other nations have, universally, corresponding terms; it is certain, that these are the ideas of all men; every where presented by experience and observation; derived from facts, and grounded in reality. The common voice of mankind has, therefore, decided the question in a manner, which, I apprehend, is incapable of error, and can never be impeached.

In perfect accordance with these observations, we know, that *voluntary blindness to evidence, argument, and truth*, is customary phraseology in the daily conversation of all men. In accordance with these observations also, the declaration, *that none are so blind, as they who will not see*, is proverbial, and regarded as a maxim.

3dly. *The mind is perfectly voluntary in the employment of collecting evidence, on every question which it discusses.*

All questions are attended by more or less arguments, capable of being alleged on both sides. These arguments do not present themselves of course; but must be sought for, and assembled, by the activity of the mind. In this case, the mind can either resolve, or refuse, to collect arguments; and in this conduct is wholly voluntary, and capable, therefore, of being either virtuous or sinful, praiseworthy or blameworthy, rewardable or punishable. Wherever its duty and interest; wherever the commands of God, or lawful human authority, or the well-being of ourselves, or our fellowmen; demand, that we collect such arguments; we are virtuous in obeying, and sinful in refusing.

Sometimes we obey: often we refuse. Most frequently, when we perform this duty at all, we perform it *partially*. Concerning almost every question, which is before us, we assemble some arguments, and refuse, or neglect, to gather others. In this employment the mind usually leans to one side of the question; and labours, not to find out truth, or the means of illustrating it, but to possess itself of the arguments, which will support the side to which it inclines, and weaken, or overthrow, that which it dislikes. Thus we collect all the arguments in our power, favourable to our own chosen doctrines, and oppose the contrary ones; and of design, or through negligence, avoid searching for those, which will weaken our own doctrines, or strengthen such as oppose them. In all this, our inclinations are solely and supremely active, and govern the whole process. For this conduct, therefore, we are deserving of blame; and, as the case may be, of punishment.

4thly. *The mind is equally voluntary in weighing, admitting, or rejecting, evidence, after it is collected.*

It is as easy, and as common, *for the mind to turn its eye from the power of evidence, as from the evidence itself.* I have already shown, that we can, at pleasure, either collect arguments, or refuse to collect them. With equal ease we can examine them after they

are collected, or decline this examination; and after such examination as we choose to make, is completed, we can with the same ease either admit, or reject them. The grounds, on which we can render the admission or rejection satisfactory to ourselves, are numerous; and are always at hand. The arguments in question may oppose, or coincide with, some unquestioned maxim, principle, or doctrine, pre-conceived by us, and regarded as fundamental; and for these reasons may be at once admitted, or rejected. They may accord with the opinions of those, whom we may think it pleasing, honourable, safe, or useful, to follow. We may hastily conclude, that they are all the arguments, which favour the doctrine opposed to ours; and deem them wholly insufficient to evince its truth. We may suppose, whenever they seem to conclude against us, that there is some latent error in them, discernible by others, if not by ourselves; which, if discerned, would destroy their force. We may determine, whenever the arguments in our possession are apprehended to be inconclusive in favour of our own opinions, that there are others, which, although not now in our possession, would, if discovered by us, determine the question in our favour. We may believe, that the arguments before us will, if admitted, infer some remote consequence, in our apprehension grossly absurd; and on the ground of this distant consequence reject their immediate influence. Or the doctrine, to be proved, may be so odious to us, as to induce us to believe, that no arguments whatever can evince its truth. For these and the like reasons, we can weigh or not weigh, admit or reject, any arguments whatever; and conclude in favour of either side of, perhaps, every moral question.

A Judge, in any cause which comes before him, can admit, or refuse to admit, witnesses on either side. After they have testified, he can consider, or neglect, their testimony; and can give it what degree of credit he pleases, or no credit at all. In all this, he acts voluntarily; so perfectly so, that another Judge, of a different disposition, could, and would, with the same means in his possession, draw up a directly opposite judgment concerning the cause. Facts of this nature are so frequent, as to be well known to mankind, acknowledged universally, and accounted a part of the ordinary course of things. The *mind*, in considering doctrines, is usually *this partial Judge;* and conducts itself towards its arguments, as the Judge towards his witnesses. In this conduct it is altogether voluntary, and altogether sinful.

In the contrary conduct of collecting arguments with a design to know the truth; in weighing them fairly; and in admitting readily their real import; it is equally voluntary; and possesses, and exhibits, the contrary character of virtue as really, as in any case whatever. Accordingly, all men, when employed in observing these two modes of acting in their fellow-men, have pronounced the latter to be excellent and praiseworthy, and the former to be unjust, base, and deserving alike of their contempt and abhorrence.

5thly. *The doctrine, which I am opposing, if true, renders both virtue and vice, at least in a great proportion of instances, impossible.*

All virtue is nothing else, but *voluntary obedience to truth;* and all sin is nothing else, but *voluntary disobedience to truth, or voluntary obedience to error.* Accordingly, God has required nothing of mankind, but that *they should obey truth; particularly* THE TRUTH; *or Evangelical truth.* Voluntary conformity to truth, is, therefore, virtue in every possible instance. But we cannot voluntarily conform to truth, unless we believe it. If our faith, then, is wholly involuntary, and necessary; it follows of course, that we are never faulty, nor punishable, for not believing; since our faith in every case, where we do not believe, is physically impossible. For not believing, therefore, we are not, and cannot be, blameable; and as we cannot conform to truth, when we do not believe it to be truth; it follows, that, whenever we do not believe, we are innocent in not obeying.

For the same reason, whenever we believe error to be truth, our belief, according to this scheme, is compelled by the same physical necessity; and we are guiltless in every such instance of faith. All our future conformity to such error is of course guiltless also. Thus he, who believes in the existence and perfections of Jehovah, in the rectitude of his law and Government, and in the duty of obeying him, and he, who believes in the Deity of Beelzebub, or a calf, or a stock, or a stone; while they respectively worship, and serve, these infinitely different gods; are in the same degree virtuous, or in the same degree sinful. In other words, they are neither sinful, nor virtuous. The faith of both is alike physically necessary; and the conformity of both to their respective tenets follows their faith, of course.

Should it be said, *that although faith is thus necessary, our conformity, or non-conformity, to what we believe, is still voluntary; and therefore is virtuous:* I answer, that were I to allow this, as I am not very unwilling to do, to be true; still, the objector must acknowledge, that a vast proportion of those human actions, which have universally been esteemed the most horrid crimes, are, according to his own plan, completely justified. He cannot deny, that the *heathen* have almost universally believed their idols to be gods, and their idolatry the true religion. He cannot deny, that a great part of the wars, which have existed in the world, have by those, who have carried them on, been believed to be just; that the persecutions of the *Christians* were by the *heathen*, who were the authors of them, thought highly meritorious; that the horrid cruelties of the *Popish* Inquisition were to a great extent, considered by the *Catholics* as *doing God service;* and that all the *Mohammedan* butcheries were regarded by the disciples of the *Koran* as directly required by God himself. Nay, it cannot be denied by the Objector, nor by any man who has considered the subject, that the *Jews*, in very great numbers, believed themselves warranted in rejecting,

persecuting, and crucifying Christ. This is undoubtedly indicated by that terrible prediction of the Saviour, *If ye believe not, that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* Let the Objector, then, and all who hold his opinions on this subject, henceforth be for ever silent concerning the guilt, usually attributed to these several classes of men; and acknowledge them to have been compelled by a physical necessity to all these actions; lamentable indeed, but wholly unstained with any criminality.

At the same time, let it be observed, that the determination of the Will is always as the dictate of the Understanding, which precedes it. If, then, this dictate of the Understanding is produced by a physical necessity; how can the decision of the Will, which follows it of course, be in any sense free? If faith be necessary in the physical sense; every other dictate of the Understanding must be equally necessary; and, of course, that, which precedes every determination of the will. In what manner, then, can the determination of the will fail of being the mere result of the same necessity?

But if the determinations of the will are physically necessary; they cannot be either virtuous or sinful. If, therefore, these things are true, there can be, according to this scheme, neither virtue, nor vice, in man.

6thly. *This doctrine charges God with a great part, if not with all the evil conduct of mankind.*

Whatever the system of things in this world is, it was contrived, and created, and is continually ordered, by God. If mankind believe, only under the coercion of physical necessity; then God has so constituted them, as to render their faith, in this sense, necessary and unavoidable. Whenever they err, therefore, they err thus necessarily by the ordinance, and irresistible power, of God. Of course, as the state of things in this, as well as all other respects, is the result of his choice; he has chosen, that they should err, and compelled them to err by the irresistible impulse of almighty power. In this case, we will suppose them to design faithfully to do their duty; or, in other words, to conform their conduct to the doctrines, which they actually believe, and suppose to be truth. In thus acting, they either sin; or they do not. If they sin; God compels them to sin. If they do not; still, all their conduct is productive of evil only: for conformity to error is, of course, productive only of evil. By this scheme, therefore, this mass of evil, immensely great and dreadful, is charged to God alone.

At the same time, if in the same manner they embrace truth; their reception of it is equally compelled. Their conformity to it is, of course, no more commendable, than their conformity to error: and God has so constituted things, that they cannot conform to it of choice, or from love to truth, as such; but only from physical necessity. Or, if this should be questioned, they cannot conform to it from the apprehension that it is truth; because they have em-

braced it under the force of this necessity; and must conform to every thing, which they have embraced, in one manner only.

There are many other modes of disproving this doctrine, on which I cannot now dwell; and which cannot be necessary for the present purpose, if the arguments, already advanced, have the decisive influence, which they appear to me to possess. I will only observe further, that the scheme, which I am opposing, is directly at war with all the commands and exhortations, given us to *search the Scriptures*, to *receive the truth*, to *seek for wisdom*, to *know God*, to *believe in Christ*, and to *believe his word;* and with the commendations and promises, given to those who do, and the censures and threatenings, denounced against those who do not, these things. Equally inconsistent are they with all our own mutual exhortations to candour, to investigation, to impartial decisions, and to all other conduct of the like nature; our commendation of those who pursue it, and our condemnation of those who do not. Both the Scriptures and common sense ought, if this scheme is well founded, to assume totally new language, if they would accord with truth.

Should any person suppose, that I have annexed too much importance to truth, in asserting, *that virtue, in all instances, is nothing else, but a voluntary conformity to truth;* and imagined, that it ought to be defined, *a voluntary conformity to the divine precepts;* he may gain complete satisfaction, on this point, by merely changing a precept into a proposition. For example; the precepts, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me*, and *Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother*, become truths, when written in this manner: *It is right, or it is thy duty, to have no other Gods before me; or to honour thy father and thy mother.*

I have now, if I mistake not, clearly evinced the falsehood of the doctrine, which I have opposed; and shown it to be equally contrary to the Scriptures, and to the Common sense of mankind.

Whenever this doctrine *has been honestly imbibed*, it has, I presume, been imbibed from a misapprehension of the influence of that acknowledged principle of philosophy; *that in receiving impressions from all objects the mind is passive only; and, therefore, is necessitated to receive just such impressions, as the objects, presented to its view, are fitted to make.* No man, acquainted with the state of the human mind, will call this principle in question. But no man, of this character, can rationally imagine, that it can at all affect the subject of this discourse; so as to furnish any support to the scheme, which I am opposing.

The amount of this principle is exactly this: *that God has so constituted the mind, and has formed objects in such a manner, that they uniformly present to the mind their real state and nature, and not another.* Were this not the structure of the mind, and the proper efficacy of the objects, *with which it is conversant;* it would either be never able to see truly, or would never know when it saw in this manner. This constitution of things, then, is indis-

pensable to our discernment of their true nature; and without it we could never be able, satisfactorily, to distinguish truth from falsehood.

But nothing is more evident, than that this constitution of things in no degree affects the subject in debate. In no sense is it true, that, because we have such optics; and the things, with which we are conversant, such a nature; we are, therefore, obliged to turn our eyes to any given object; to view it on any given side; to examine it in any given manner; or to connect it, in our investigation, with any other particular set of objects. Truth is the real agreement or disagreement of ideas, asserted in propositions. The *relations of these ideas are its basis*. Now we can compare, and connect, what ideas we please, in what manner we please, and by the aid of any other intervening ideas which we choose. In this manner, we can unite, and separate, them at pleasure; and thus either come to the knowledge of truth, or the admission of falsehood, according to our inclinations. All these things, also, we can refuse to do; and in both cases we act in a manner perfectly voluntary. Were we not *passive* in the mere reception of ideas, we should see, to no purpose. Were we not active in comparing and connecting them, we should see only under the influence of physical necessity.

From these considerations it is evident, unless I am deceived, that this principle, so much relied on by those, with whom I am contending, has not the least influence towards the support of their scheme.

## REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1st. *Why men in exactly the same circumstances, judge, and believe, very differently concerning the same objects.*

When a question, or doctrine, is proposed to the consideration of several men, in the same terms, with the same arguments, and at the same time; we, almost of course, find them judging, and deciding, concerning it, in different manners. Were our judgment, or, what is here the same thing, our faith, the result of mere physical necessity; this fact could never take place. But it is easily explained, as the natural course of things, where such judges as men are concerned. When a question is thus proposed; one declines, or neglects, to inquire, altogether. Another listens only to the evidence on one side. A third, partially to that on both sides. A fourth, partially to that on one side, and wholly to that on the other. And a fifth, to all the evidence, which he can find. One cares nothing about the question; another is pre-determined to give his decision on one side; and another resolves to decide according to truth. One is too lazy; another too indifferent; another too biassed; and another too self-sufficient; to discover truth at all. In all these, except the candid, thorough examiner, the

conduct which they adopt on this subject, is sin. Inclination, choice, bias of mind, prevents them from *coming to the knowledge of the truth.* If they loved truth, as their duty demands, they would easily, and certainly, find it. Their indifference to it, or their hatred of it, is the true reason, why they find it not; and the real explanation of the strange manner, in which they judge, and of their otherwise inexplicable faith in doctrines, not only absurd, but unsupported even by specious evidence.

2dly. *From these observations, also, it is evident, that faith may be a virtuous, and unbelief a sinful, affection of the mind.*

Truth is the foundation of all good. On this, as their basis, rest the character, designs, government, and glory, of the Creator; and all the happiness and virtue of the Intelligent Universe. But the only way, in which truth can be useful to Intelligent creatures, or the means of the Divine glory, is *by being believed.* Every degree of happy influence, which truth has, or can have, on the Intelligent Kingdom, is, therefore, derived entirely from faith; so far as absolute knowledge is not attainable. On faith, then, all these amazing interests wholly rest. That which is not believed cannot be obeyed. The influence of truth cannot commence in our minds, until our faith in it has commenced. Universal unbelief, therefore, would completely destroy the Divine Kingdom, and the general happiness, at once. Of course, partial unbelief; the unbelief of many, a few, or one; aims directly at the same destruction.

Since, then, faith is a voluntary exercise of the mind; it follows, that, whenever it is exercised towards moral objects, it is virtuous; is an effort of the mind, directed to the promotion of this immense good, which I have specified. To the degree, in which it may be thus virtuous, no limits can be affixed: but it may rise to such a height, as to occupy all the supposable powers of any Intelligent creature.

On the contrary, Unbelief, when directed towards moral objects, being always voluntary, is always sinful. Its efficacy, as opposed to the glory of God and the good of the Universe, has been already mentioned. Its insolence towards the Divine character is exhibited in the strongest terms by St. John, in this memorable declaration: *He, that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.* What a reproach is this to the Creator! What an impious expression of contempt, to the infinitely blessed Jehovah! The very insult offered to him by the old Serpent, in his seduction of our first parents! *Them* this unbelief destroyed; and, from that melancholy day, it has been the great instrument of perdition to their posterity. Faith is the only medium of our access to God. *To come to him* we *must believe that he is:* for without such belief he would be to us a mere nihility. *Atheism*, therefore, cuts a man off from all access to God; and consequently from all love, and all obedience. Were the Universe atheistical, it would cease from all moral con-

nexion with its Creator. *Deism*, though a humbler degree of the same spirit, produces exactly the same effects. *He, that believeth not the Son, hath not life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. Practical unbelief*, the same spirit in a degree still inferior, is, however, followed by the same miserable consequences. A mere speculative belief leaves the heart, and the life, as it found them; opposed to God, and the objects of his indignation. The Speculative believer, therefore, although advanced a step beyond the Deist and two beyond the Atheist, is still disobedient and rebellious. *without hope, and without God in the world.*

# SERMON LXVI.

JUSTIFICATION.—THE NATURE OF FAITH.

ROMANS iii. 28—*Therefore we conclude, that Man is justified by faith, without works of Law.*

IN my last discourse, I attempted to show, *that faith and unbelief are voluntary exercises of the mind, and may, therefore, be virtuous or sinful; and to refute the objections against this doctrine.* This I did, without critically examining *the Nature of faith*, which I purposely reserved for a separate discussion. *This* is evidently the next object of inquiry. I shall, therefore, endeavour, in this discourse, *to explain the Faith of the Gospel; or the Faith by which we are justified.*

I. *Faith, in this sense, respects God as its object.*

*Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.* Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6. James ii. 23. *Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe, that he is, and that he is the rewarder, of them that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. *Believe in the Lord your God; so shall ye be established.* 2 Chron. ii. 20. *Who by him*, says St. *Peter* to the Christians to whom he wrote, *do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.* 1 Pet. i. 21. *The Jailer rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.* Acts xvi. 34. *That they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. Jesus answering saith unto them, Believe in God.* Mark xi. 27. *He that believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life.* John v. 24.

It will be unnecessary to multiply proofs any farther. I have made these numerous quotations, to show, that, in the common language of the Scriptures, Faith in God is commanded; is the universal characteristic of Christians; is declared to be the object of Divine approbation; *is counted to them for righteousness;* and is entitled to an everlasting reward.

II. *The faith of the Gospel especially respects Christ as its object.*

*Ye believe in God*, says our Saviour to his Apostles, *believe also in me.* John xiv. 1. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* John viii. 24. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: he that believeth not is condemned already.* John iii. 36. John iii. 18. and John vi. 40. *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* Rom. iv. 5. In these passages it is evident, that to all such as are acquainted with the Gospel it is indispensable, that their faith respect Christ as its especial object; that, wherever this is

the fact, they are assured of everlasting life; and wherever it is not, they will not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on them.

III. *The faith of the Gospel respects Christ, particularly, as the Son of God.*

*He that believeth on the Son, hath life.* John vi. 40. John iii. 36. *And he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.* 1 John ii. 23. *He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he believeth not on the name of the only begotten Son of God.* John iii. 18.

IV. *The Faith of the Gospel respects Christ as its object, in all his offices, but especially in his priestly office.*

*As a prophet, or the preacher of the Gospel.*

*Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free. He that receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him.* John xii. 48. *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* John vi. 63. *That they might all be damned, who believed not the truth.* 2 Thess. ii. 12. *The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.* Rom. i. 16. *In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.* 1 Cor. iv. 15.

*As a Priest.*

*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.* Rom. iii. 25. *My blood is drink indeed.* John vi. 55. *Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.* John vi. 54. See also 53, 56, and 57. *So many of us, as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death.* Rom. vi. 3. Generally, all those passages, which speak of mankind as justified, and saved, by the blood and by the death of Christ, indicate, in an unequivocal manner, that our faith especially respects this as its object; because his death is especially the means of our salvation; since by this he became *a propitiation for the sins of the world.*

*As a King.*

*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.* Acts xvi. 31. *No man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor. xii. 3. *And they stoned Stephen, invocating, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; and he cried, with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* Acts vii. 59, 60. *For I know in whom I have believed; and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* In all these instances the Faith, referred to, is evidently faith in Christ, as *the Lord, or King, in Zion.* The two last passages exhibit very strong examples of faith in Christ, as the sovereign disposer of all things. To *deny the Lord, who bought us,* St. Peter declares to be the means of *bringing upon ourselves swift destruction.* 2 Pet. ii. 1.

V. *The Faith of the Gospel is an affection of the heart.*

*With the heart*, says St. *Paul*, *man believeth unto righteousness.* Rom. x. 10. This passage would be more literally translated, *With the heart faith exists unto righteousness*, that is, the faith which *is accounted to man for righteousness*, or which is productive of righteousness in the life, hath its seat in the heart; and the heart in this exercise co-operates with the understanding. In the former of these senses, the faith itself is called, Rom. iv. 13, *the righteousness of faith;* the faith itself being a righteous or virtuous exercise. *For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through law, but through the righteousness of Faith.* Rom. iv. 13. *If thou believest with all thine heart*, said *Philip* to the *Eunuch*, *thou mayest be baptized.* Acts viii. 37. The faith of the heart, therefore, was indispensable to the Eunuch, as the proper subject of baptism.

VI. *The Faith of the Gospel is the Faith of Abraham.*

Both St. *Paul* and St. *James* have taught this doctrine so clearly, and so abundantly, that I suppose no proof of this truth will be demanded. I shall only observe, therefore, that by St. *Paul* the believing *Gentiles* are said to *walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham;* and to be *the seed, which is of the faith of Abraham;* and that on this account *Abraham* is called *the Father of all them that believe*, in reference to the promise, *that he should be the father of many nations.* Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16.

Having established, as I hope, these several points by clear, unequivocal scriptural decisions; I proceed to the main object of this discourse, to which all that has been said will be found to be intimately related, and highly important, by every person who wishes to understand this supremely interesting subject, viz. *the nature of that exercise*, which thus respects God as its object; which peculiarly respects Christ as its object; which is an affection of the heart; and which is of the very same nature with that faith, which *was counted to Abraham for righteousness.* I assert, then,

VII. *That the Faith of the Gospel is that emotion of the mind, which is called trust, or Confidence, exercised towards the moral character of God, and particularly of the Saviour.*

All those of my audience, who have been accustomed to read theological writings, must know, that few moral subjects have been so much debated, as Faith. The controversy, concerning it, began in the days of the Apostles, and has continued to the present time. Many writers have undoubtedly adopted views concerning this subject, which are not warranted by the Scriptures. Many others, who have been sufficiently orthodox, have yet appeared to me to leave the subject less clear, and distinct, than I have wished. Few of their readers have, I suspect, left the perusal of what they have written with such satisfactory views, concerning the nature of faith, as to leave their minds free from perplexity and doubt. Most of them would, I apprehend, wish to ask the writers a few questions at least; the answers to which would, in their view, probably re-

move several difficulties, and place the whole subject in a more distinct and obvious light. The difficulty, which, in my own researches, has appeared to attend many orthodox writings concerning it, has been this: It has been connected with various other things, which, although contributing, perhaps, to the writer's particular purpose, have yet distracted my attention, and prevented me from obtaining that clear and distinct view of faith, which I wished. Like a man, seen in a crowd, its appearance, although in many respects real and true, was yet obscure, indistinct, and unsatisfactory. I wished to see and survey it alone.

It will not, I suppose, be doubted, *that Evangelical faith*, whatever is its object, *is in all instances one single exercise of the mind.* This being admitted, I proceed to show, that this exercise is the Confidence, mentioned above, by the following arguments.

1st. *This Confidence was the faith of Abraham.*

This position I shall illustrate from two passages of Scripture. The first is Heb. xi. 8, *By Faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.* In this passage of Scripture it is declared, that Abraham was called to go into a distant land; and that, in obedience to this call, *he went out; not knowing whither he went.* It is further declared, that *he went by faith;* that is, the faith so often mentioned in this chapter. That this was Evangelical or justifying faith is certain; because at the close of the preceding chapter, it is mentioned as the faith by which the just shall live, (see verse 38) because it is styled the faith, *without which it is impossible to please God;* the faith, with which *Abraham* offered up Isaac;* with which *Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt;* with which believers are said *to desire a better country*, that is, *an heavenly;* and on account *of which God is not ashamed to be called their God;* and to reward which he is said to have *prepared for them a city;* or in other words, heaven.† The faith, then, with which *Abraham* went out to the land of Canaan, was the faith of the Gospel.

The whole of the chapter is employed in unfolding the nature of this Virtue. The manner, in which this is done, will, I am persuaded, be found, upon a thorough examination, to be singularly wise and happy. Faith is here described by its *effects*, and by effects which it has actually produced. These are chosen with great felicity and success. The persons selected, are persons who lived long before the appearance of Christ. Of course they knew very little concerning this glorious person, in the strict sense of the term, *knowing*. Their faith was, therefore, not at all confused, and obscured, by any real, or apprehended, mixture of knowledge. It existed simply, and by itself; and for that reason is seen apart from

* See James ii. 21—23. † See Heb. xi. 6, 16, 17, 26

all other objects. In each of these persons it is seen in a new situation; and therefore, in some respects, in a new light. It appears in strong and efficacious exercise; and is therefore seen indubitably. It is exhibited as producing obedience in very many forms; and is thus exhibited as the source of obedience in every form. It is seen in many situations, and those highly interesting and difficult; and is therefore proved to be capable of producing obedience in every situation, and of enabling us to overcome every difficulty. In a word, it is here proved beyond debate, that faith is in all instances, *the victory, which overcometh the world.*

The faith of *Abraham*, exercised on this occasion, was, then, the faith of the Gospel. To understand its nature, as exhibited in this passage, it will be useful to consider the whole situation and conduct of *Abraham*, at the time specified.

When *Abraham* was called to go out of his own land, he knew not whither he was going; to what country, or to what kind of residence. He knew not whether the people would prove friends or enemies, kind or cruel, comfortable or uncomfortable, neighbours to him; nor whether his own situation, and that of his family, would be happy or unhappy. Wholly uninfluenced by these considerations, and all others, by which men are usually governed in their enterprises, he still adventured upon an undertaking, in which his own temporal interests and those of his family, were finally embarked. Why did he thus adventure? The only answer to this question is, he was induced to go by a regard to the character of the person who called him. This regard was of a peculiar kind. It was not reverence, love, nor admiration. Neither of these is assigned by the Apostle as the cause of his conduct. They might, they undoubtedly did, exist, in his mind; but they did not govern his determination.

The emotion, by which he was compelled to leave his home, was *confidence*. God summoned him to this hazardous and important expedition: and he readily obeyed the summons. The true and only reason was, he confided entirely in the character and directions of God. God, in his view, was a being of such a character, that it was safe, and in all respects desirable, for *Abraham* to trust himself implicitly to his guidance. Such were his views of this glorious Being, that to commit himself, and all his concerns, to the direction of God was, in his estimation, the best thing in his power; best for him, and best for his family. He considered God as knowing better than he knew, and as choosing better than he could choose for himself. At the same time he experienced an exquisite pleasure in yielding himself to the direction of God. The Divine character was, to his eye, beautiful, glorious, and lovely; and the emotion of confiding in it was delightful. Sweet in itself, it was approved by his conscience, approved by his Creator, and on both accounts doubly delightful.

The prime object of this confidence was the moral character of God; his goodness, mercy, faithfulness, and truth. Unpossessed of these attributes, he could never be trusted by us. His knowledge and power would, in this case, be merely objects of terror, and foundations of that dreadful suspense, which is finished misery. The confidence of *Abraham*, therefore, was, evidently, confidence in the moral character of God.

It ought here to be observed, that the Person, to whom *Abraham's* confidence was immediately directed, was the Lord Jesus Christ. *No man hath seen God the Father at any time.* The person appearing under the name of God to the Patriarchs, was the Lord Jesus Christ. This is decisively proved in many ways; and, particularly, by the direct declaration of St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 9, *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.* The passage, here referred to, and the only one in which this event is recorded by *Moses*, is, Numb. xxi. 5, 6: *And the people spake against God, and against Moses; Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.* The God, the Jehovah, here mentioned, is unequivocally declared by St. *Paul* to be Christ: and that it was the same God, who destroyed the Israelites on this occasion, that appeared throughout the Old Testament to the Patriarchs and their descendants, will not be questioned. Christ, therefore, was the immediate object of confidence to *Abraham*.

Let me endeavour to exhibit this subject with greater clearness by a familiar example. A parent sets out upon a journey, and takes with him one of his *little* children, always accustomed to receive benefits from his parental tenderness. The child plainly knows nothing of the destined journey; of the place, to which he is going; of the people, whom he will find; the entertainment, which he will receive; the sufferings, which he must undergo; or the pleasures, which he may enjoy. Yet the child goes willingly, and with delight. Why? not because he is ignorant; for ignorance by itself is a source to him of nothing but doubt and fear. Were a stranger to propose to him the same journey, in the same terms, he would decline it at once; and could not be induced to enter upon it without compulsion. Yet his ignorance, here, would be at least equally great. He is wholly governed, as a rational being ought to be, by rational considerations. Confidence in his parent, whom he knows by experience to be only a benefactor to him, and in whose affection and tenderness he has always found safety and pleasure, is the sole ground of his cheerful acceptance of the proposed journey, and of all his subsequent conduct. In his parent's company he feels delighted; in his care, safe. Separated from him, he is at once alarmed, anxious, and miserable. Nothing can

easily restore him to peace, or comfort, or hope, but the return of his parent. In his own obedience, and filial affection, and in his father's approbation and tenderness, care and guidance, he finds sufficient enjoyment, and feels satisfied and secure. He looks for no other motive, than his father's choice, and his own confidence. The way, which his father points out, although perfectly unknown to him, the entertainment which he provides, the places at which he chooses to stop, and the measures, universally, which he is pleased to take, are, in the view of the child, all proper, right, and good. For his parent's pleasure, and for that only, he inquires; and to this single object are confined all his views, and all his affections.

No characteristic is by common sense esteemed more amiable, or more useful, in little children, more suited to their circumstances, their wants, and their character, than confidence. Nor is any parent ever better pleased with his own little children, than when they exhibit this characteristic. The pleasure of receiving it, and that of exercising it, are substantially the same.

In adult years, men of every description reciprocate the same pleasure in mutual confidence, whenever it is exercised. Friends, husbands and wives, rulers and subjects, demand, experience, and enjoy, this affection in a manner, generally corresponding with that I have described.

The *second passage*, from which I propose to show, that this confidence was the faith of *Abraham*, is Rom. iv. 20—22, *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.* The faith of *Abraham*, here described, in which he was *strong, giving glory to God*, and *which was imputed to him for righteousness*, was faith in the promise of God concerning the future birth of Isaac, through whom he was to become the progenitor of Christ, and the father of many nations, especially of believers of all ages. This faith was built on the moral character of the promiser. But faith in a promise, when it is directed to the disposition of the promiser, as is plainly the case here, because the fulfilment of the promise must depend entirely on this disposition, is the very confidence, of which I have been speaking.

2dly. *This is the faith of the Old Testament.*

*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*, says Job, chapter xiii. 15.

*I will trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.* Psalm lii. 8.

*I will trust in the covert of thy wings.* Psalm lxi. 4.

*The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him.* Psalm lxiv. 10.

*They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.* Psalm cxxv. 1.

*Who is among you that feareth the Lord? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* Isaiah l. 10.

*Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.* Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

No person, acquainted with the Scriptures, can, I think, hesitate to admit, that the exercise of mind, mentioned in these passages under the name trust, is the same with that, which in the New Testament is called faith. It is the character of the same persons; viz. the righteous; and their peculiar and pre-eminent character. The importance, and the obligations assigned to it, are the same; and the blessings promised to it are the same. All who possess and exercise it are pronounced blessed; and all who do not possess it, are declared cursed.

In the verse, following that last quoted from *Jeremiah*, the peculiar blessings of faith, are declared to be the blessings of *the man, who trusteth in the Lord. For he shall be as a tree, planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the River, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful, in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* The peculiar character, as well as peculiar blessing, of faith, is, that he, who is the subject of it, shall *abound in the work of the Lord.*

Such, precisely, is the glorious blessing, here annexed to him who trusteth in the Lord; a blessing, which is evidently the greatest of all blessings: for our Saviour informs us, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive;* to communicate good, than to gain it at the hands of others: a declaration, which St. Paul appears to make the sum of all that Christ taught concerning this interesting subject.

3dly. *It is, I apprehend, the Faith of the New Testament also.*

In various places in the New Testament, this exercise of the mind is directly called by the names *trust* and *confidence.*

*In his name shall the Gentiles trust;* quoted from Isaiah xlii. 4, where it is rendered, *the Isles shall wait for his law;* in Matthew xii. 21, and Rom. xv. 12. That the word trust, used here, denotes the faith of the Gentiles in the name of Christ, will not be questioned.

Ephesians i. 12, *St. Paul* says, that *we*, that is, himself and his fellow-christians, *should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

1 Tim. iv. 10, *For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.*

2 Tim. i. 12, *For I know whom I have believed.* The word πεπίστευκα is, by the translators, rendered *trusted*, in the margin.

It is rendered, also, in the same manner by *Cruden*, and, I think, correctly.

Heb. iii. 14, *If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end:* that is, *our faith already begun.*

Heb. xi. 1, *Faith is the confidence of things hoped for.* This may perhaps be regarded as a general definition. The word πιστευω, of which one of the meanings is *trust*, ought, I think, to be extensively rendered by this English term, in order to express the true sense of the original. The same thing may also be observed concerning its derivatives.

But the proof, which I especially mean to allege, at the present time, is contained in the following things.

1. *The faith of Abraham is the faith of the New Testament; and this has, I flatter myself, been already proved to be the confidence above mentioned.*

2. In that extensive account of faith, which is given us in the xi. chapter of *Hebrews*, we are taught, that the faith, exercised by the saints of the Old Testament, is the same with the faith of the Gospel; and this is not only generally called *Trust* in the Old Testament itself; but, as has been already proved in several instances, and, were there time or necessity, might be proved in all, is no other than the confidence which I have specified. All these persons confided in the promises of God, and in the moral character of him by whom they were given.

4thly. *The nature of the case, and the situation of the penitent, when he exercises faith in Christ, clearly evince the truth of the doctrine.*

The sinner is condemned, and ruined. By the Law of God all hope of his recovery and salvation is precluded. Left to himself, therefore, in his present situation, he cannot be saved. While he is in this miserable condition, Christ declares, that *he* is able, willing, and faithful, to save him; and that, to this end, the sinner must, indispensably, surrender himself into his hands, or give himself up to him; and consent to be saved by him in his own way. Now what can induce the sinner, in a case of this infinite magnitude, thus to give himself into the hands of Christ? Nothing but an entire confidence in his character, as thus able, willing, and faithful to save. But how shall the sinner know this? Or if he cannot know it, how shall he be persuaded of it? Know it, in the proper sense of knowledge, he cannot; for it is plainly not an object of science. The *word* of Christ is the only ultimate evidence, by which he must be governed; and this word depends, for all its veracity and convincing influence, on the moral character of Christ; on his goodness, faithfulness, and truth. Whenever the sinner, therefore, gives himself to Christ, according to his proposal, and in obedience to his commands, he does it merely because he places an entire confidence in his moral character, and in the declarations which he has made. In these he confides, because they are the

declarations of just such a person, possessing just such a moral character. On this he trusts himself, his soul, his eternal well-being.

If he trusts in the instructions, precepts, and ordinances of Christ, (for our faith is not unfrequently said to be exercised towards these) it is only because they are the instructions, precepts, and ordinances of such a person. Some of them, indeed, he may discern to be true and right, in themselves; but for the truth of others, and the wisdom and safety of obeying them all, he relies, and must rely, only on Christ's character as their author. If he believes in the righteousness of Christ, and the acceptableness of it to God, as the foundation of pardon and peace to sinners; he believes, or trusts, in it, only because it is the righteousness of just such a person.

The same things are true of his faith in the invitations, promises, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, government, intercession, presence, protection, and universal blessings, of the Redeemer. The faith of the Christian is exercised towards all these things. But all of them, separated from his moral character, are nothing to the believer.

From these considerations it is, I think, sufficiently evident, that the faith of the Gospel, whatever may be its immediate object, is no other than confidence in the moral character of God, especially of the Redeemer.

If I am asked, "What is Confidence in moral character?" I answer, look into your own bosoms; and examine what is that exercise of mind, in which you trust a man for the sake of what he is: a parent, for example, or a friend. In this exercise you will find a strong illustration of the faith of the Gospel.

*Confidence*, or *trust*, is *a complex emotion of the mind;* and involves *good-will to its object*. We cannot thus confide in any person, whom we do not love.

It involves, also, *Complacency in the object;* or approbation of his character. We cannot thus trust any person, whom we do not esteem.

It involves *a Conviction, that the attributes, which awaken our confidence, really exist in the person whom we trust.*

It involves *a Persuasion, that, in the case, and on the terms, proposed, the person, in whom we confide, is ready to befriend us.* Until this is admitted by us, there will be nothing, about which our confidence can be exercised.

It involves *a sincere delight, in every exercise of it.* No emotion yields higher enjoyment than confidence.

It involves *a cheerful devotion to the interests, and pleasure, of the object trusted; a disposition to promote those interests, and to conform to that pleasure.* Towards a superior, it is thus the foundation of constant and ready obedience.

Generally, it is *the true and supreme attachment of a creature to*

*his Creator;* in which he surrenders himself entirely into his hands, to be disposed of by him at his pleasure, and to be made the instrument of his glory.

## REMARKS.

1st. *This account of Evangelical faith, if admitted, puts an end to all disputes concerning the question, Whether Faith is a moral virtue.*

So long as the nature of faith is unsettled, every question, depending on it, must be unsettled also. If we do not determine what the faith of the Gospel is, we are ill prepared to decide whether it is of a moral nature, or not. If the faith of the Gospel be *a mere speculative assent to probable evidence*, although we may indeed be virtuous in the disposition, with which we at times exercise it, as was, I trust, proved in the preceding discourse; yet, clearly, it is not necessarily virtuous; nor, if the mind stop here, can it be virtuous at all. In mere speculative belief, existing, by itself; that is, in merely yielding our assent to probable evidence; we are, as I observed in the same discourse, entirely passive, and in no sense virtuous. But if faith is confidence in God, of the nature here exhibited, it is beyond dispute virtue; virtue of pre-eminent importance, and capable of existing in every possible degree. So far as I know, Confidence, in this sense, has ever been esteemed voluntary, and acknowledged, therefore, to be of a moral nature. Plainly this is its true character. Accordingly, it is approved, loved, and commended, by all mankind; and undoubtedly merits all the encomiums, given to it, both in profane writings and in Revelation.

One of the principal reasons, why the faith of the Gospel has been supposed to be a mere speculative belief, is probably this: *speculative belief is the thing, intended by the term faith in its original sense.* It is not very unnatural, therefore, when we begin to read the Scriptures, to consider this as the meaning of the word in these writings; nor is it very unnatural for men of a sanguine cast, men who have a system to defend, or men who change their opinions with reluctance, to retain an interpretation which they have once imbibed. We are not, therefore, to wonder, that this opinion has been extensively spread, or pertinaciously retained.

But the Scriptures give no countenance to this doctrine. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*, is the sum of their instructions concerning this subject. He, who can believe, that a speculative assent to probable evidence, such as that which we yield to ordinary historical testimony, produced the effects ascribed to faith, in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, can certainly believe any thing.

2dly. *This doctrine explains to us the Manner, in which faith is spoken of in the Scriptures.*

Particularly, we see abundant reasons, why it is spoken of as a Virtue; and is accordingly commanded in many forms, on many

occasions, and to all persons; and why it is promised a glorious and endless reward. At the same time, we have explained to us in the same satisfactory manner, the various scriptural accounts of its opposites, *Distrust*, or *Unbelief;* and the reasons why it is pronounced to be sinful, is every where forbidden, and is threatened with endless punishment. This exhibition of faith, also, explains to us in the most satisfactory manner, why faith is strongly and universally commended in the Scriptures; and why unbelief is reprobated in a similar manner; why saints are called believers and faithful; these names being considered as equivalent to the names holy and virtuous; and why unbelievers and infidels are terms used in the Scriptures, as equivalent to sinful, wicked, and ungodly. We learn, further, why faith, directed to the Word, Ordinances, and Providence, of God; to the Example, Atonement, Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation, of Christ; or directly to the Character of God and the Redeemer, is considered, in the Scriptures, as substantially of the same nature and as the same thing: the faith, exercised, being always the same moral act, springing from the same spirit, terminating in the same object, and producing the same effects. If, therefore, it exists with reference to one of these objects, it exists, also, in successive acts, invariably, towards them all. Finally; we see the reason, why faith in God, in Christ, or in divine truth, is exhibited as being, in a sense, the sum of all duty, and the foundation of all present and future, spiritual good; and why unbelief is presented to us, as, in a sense, the sum of all disobedience, and the source of all spiritual evil both here and hereafter.

These and the like representations, are easily explained, if by Faith we intend Confidence in the moral character of God and the Redeemer. This confidence is plainly the beginning, and the continuance, of union and attachment to our Creator; while, on the other hand, distrust is a complete separation of the soul from the Author of its being. It is plainly impossible for him, who distrusts God, to have any moral union to him, or any devotion to his pleasure.

Confidence is also the highest honour, which an Intelligent creature can render to his Creator. No act of such a creature can so clearly, or so strongly, declare his approbation of the Divine character, or his devotion to the Divine will, as committing ourselves entirely to him in this manner. In this act, we declare, in the most decisive manner, the character of God to be formed of such attributes, as will secure our whole well-being, and fulfil all our vindicable desires. Whatever can be hoped for from supreme and infinite excellence, we declare ourselves to expect from the character of God; and pronounce his pleasure to be, in our view, the sum of all that is excellent and desirable. In distrusting God, we declare in the same forcible manner precisely the opposite things;

and thus, so far as is in our power, dishonour his character, and impeach his designs.

3dly. *This account of Faith, strongly evinces the Divinity of Christ.*

The faith, which we are required to exercise in Christ, is as unqualified, as entire, and as extensive, as that which we are required to exercise towards God. The blessings, promised to it, are the same; and the evils, threatened to our refusal of it, are also the same. No mark of difference, with respect to these particulars, is even hinted at in the Scriptures. This must, I think, be inexplicable, unless the attribute to which alone the faith is directed, and which alone render it our duty to exercise it, are in each case the same.

Besides, it is incredible, that an Intelligent being, rationally employed, should confide himself, his everlasting interests, his all, to any hands, but those of infinite perfection. *Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost*, could not, I think, as he was leaving the world, have said to any creature, *Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* No man, in the possession of a sound mind, could, as it seems to me, say this even to *Gabriel* himself.

4thly. *We learn from these observations, that the faith of the Gospel will exist for ever.*

We often speak of faith, as hereafter *to be swallowed up in vision;* and intend by this, that it will cease to exist in the future world. In a qualified sense, it is undoubtedly true; for many things which we now believe only, we shall hereafter know with certainty. But Confidence in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, will exist for ever. Moral character seems not, in its nature, to be an object of science, properly so called. Spirits by every eye, except the Omniscient, are discerned only through the medium of their actions; which are proof of their natural attributes, and expressions of their moral character. Moral character is the amount of all the volitions of a moral agent. As these are free and independent, they are incapable of being known, but by the voluntary manifestations of the agent himself. United, they form, and exhibit, the whole moral character. In parts, though they denote it truly, they denote it imperfectly.

In every age of Eternity it will be true, that, in the physical sense, it is possible for God to oppress, or destroy, even his obedient creatures. The proofs that he will not are found only in the disclosure of his moral character; and on these disclosures his virtuous creatures will for ever rely with undoubting confidence, and with the utmost propriety and wisdom. Knowledge, or science, in the strict sense, they will not, I think, be ever able to obtain of this immensely important subject; nor would they be benefited, were they able. Science is in no degree of a moral nature, nor of course attended by virtuous affections, nor followed by virtuous conduct. But confidence is in itself moral, and virtuous,

and capable of being the highest virtue of a rational creature. Amiable and excellent in itself, it is approved and loved by God; the foundation of delight in his character; the source of uninterrupted obedience to his will; an endearing and immoveable union to him; a similar union to the virtuous Universe; and the basis of everlasting friendship and beneficence, in all their mutual intercourse.

It will therefore revive beyond the grave; and with new vigour and perfection. With every new display of divine excellence, and created worth, it will rise higher and higher without end. The mind, in which it exists, will, in every stage of its progress, become wiser, nobler, better, and happier. Heaven in all its concerns; its inhabitants; and dispensations; will, from its influence, assume without intermission a brighter aspect; and the immense, eternal Kingdom of Jehovah continually become a more and more perfect mirror, reflecting, with increasing splendour, his supreme excellence and glory.

# SERMON LXVII.

JUSTIFICATION.—THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH IN OUR JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS iii. 28.—*Therefore we conclude that man is justified by Faith without works of Law.*

HAVING shown, *that we are justified freely by the grace of God; proved the duty of believing;* and *explained the nature of Evangelical Faith;* in the three preceding discourses; I shall now proceed to examine *the Connexion of Faith with our justification.* The first of these discourses was employed in discussing *that which is done in our justification on the part of God.* In this discourse, I shall examine *the Nature and Influence of that which is done on the part of man*, towards the accomplishment of this important event. We are justified freely, or gratuitously. Yet we are justified conditionally: not in our natural, corrupt, and universal state; but in consequence of a new and peculiar state, denoted by the word *faith.*

In discussing this subject, I shall include the observations which I think it necessary to make, under the following heads:

I. *The Manner, in which faith becomes*, and,

II. *The Propriety, with which it is constituted the Means of our justification.*

I. *I shall attempt to describe the Manner, in which Faith becomes the Means of our justification.*

To exhibit this subject in the clearest light, it will be useful to return again to *the Covenant of Redemption;* in which the justification of mankind was originally promised. You will perhaps remember, that there are, as was formerly stated, *three distinct promises*, contained in this Covenant; beside *the general one, which involves them all: that Christ shall see, or possess, a seed; that this seed shall prolong their days; or endure, or be happy, for ever; and that the throne, or dominion, of Christ, over them, shall be as the days of heaven:* or in other words, *eternal.* The first of these promises, on which the other two are founded, is *that Christ shall see, or possess, a seed:* that is, *he shall have a number, elsewhere said to be very great, of children, disciples, or followers, in consequence of making his soul an offering for sin;* or *a propitiatory sacrifice.*

The great question, naturally arising in this place, is, *In what manner do Apostate Men, of whom his followers were to consist, become his seed?* To this question I answer: *By Faith.* In explain-

ing the true and full import of this answer, every thing may be said which is necessary to the object under consideration. To this end, it will be proper to observe,

1st. *That Mankind do not become the children of Christ by Creation.*

By Creation, all men are equally his children. But all men are not his children, in the sense of this covenant. In this sense, those only are his seed, who are his disciples. But we know from innumerable passages of Scripture, that all men are not his disciples.

2dly. *Men do not become the children of Christ by their Obedience to the Law.*

No man has obeyed the Law; and, therefore, *by works of Law no flesh can be justified.*

3dly. *Men do not become the children of Christ, merely by his Atonement.*

Christ was *a propitiation for the sins of the whole world,* as well as for his disciples'. But the whole world is not included in the number of his disciples.

4thly. *Mankind do not become the children of Christ by their obedience, wrought after they believe in him.*

No man ever obeys in the scriptural sense, until after he has believed. But men are children of Christ, whenever they believe; and *that,* whether they live to perform acts of obedience, or not. Multitudes, there is every reason to suppose, die so soon after believing, as to render it impossible for them to perform any acts of obedience whatever. All these are disciples of Christ. Men, therefore, *are justified by faith, without works of Law.*

As these are all the modes, in which mankind have ever been supposed to become disciples of Christ, beside that, which is the main subject of this discourse; the necessary conclusion from these observations will be, that *men become his children by faith, according to the meaning of this Covenant.*

At the same time, the nature of the case furnishes the most conclusive evidence to this position. Men, in their original state, are ruined and helpless. In this state, Christ offers himself to them as a Saviour, on the condition, that *they will become his;* or that *they will come to him;* or that *they will give themselves up to him;* or in other words, *voluntarily become his.* In the xvii. chapter of John, verse 2d, Christ says, in his intercessory prayer to God: *As thou hast given him,* that is, *Christ, power over all flesh; that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* In the 9th verse, he says, *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.* In these passages we learn that the Father gave to Christ, originally, some of the human race; that all these are Christ's; that he is glorified in them; and that he gives them eternal life.

*The Covenant of Grace*, made between God and mankind, is contained in these words: *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* In this Covenant, God is pleased to engage, on his part, to be the God of all who will be his; and man, on his part, gives himself up to God, engaging to be his. Accordingly, mankind are commanded to yield themselves to God. *Yield yourselves*, says *St. Paul* to the Romans, *unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.* Rom. vi. 13. *Be ye not stiff-necked*, said *Hezekiah* to the *Israelites, as your fathers were; but yield yourselves unto the Lord; and serve the Lord, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.*

According to this scheme, which is every where the scheme of the Scriptures, those who are children of Christ become such, first, by being given to him of the Father, next by giving themselves to him, and then by being received by him. *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.* John vi. 37. Thus it is evident, that *that*, which, on the part of mankind, makes them Christ's children, is *their own voluntary gift of themselves to him.* Accordingly *St. Paul*, speaking in the 2d Epistle to the *Corinthians*, of the *Macedonian* Christians, says, that *they first gave their own selves to the Lord.* Chapter viii. 5.

*The act, by which the voluntary surrender of ourselves to Christ is accomplished, is the faith, or confidence, of the Gospel.* When Christ proposes himself to us as a Saviour, it is plain, that we have no other security of the salvation, which he promises, beside the promise itself; and this furnishes no security, beside what is contained in his character. Confidence, then, in his character, and in his promise as founded on it, is that act of the mind, by which alone it renders itself to Christ, and becomes his; one of his children; his disciple; his follower. Unless the soul confide in him, it is plainly impossible, that it should confide, or yield, itself to him; and, unless it yield itself to him, it cannot become his. But the act of *confiding in him* is, in the case specified, the act also of *confiding itself to him.*

When the soul thus renders itself into the hands of Christ, *it does it on his own terms.* It casts off all former dependence on its own righteousness, whether apprehended, or real, for acceptance with God; for forgiveness and justification. Conscious of its entire unworthiness, and desert of the Divine anger, the reality and greatness of its guilt, the justice of its condemnation, and the impossibility of expiating its own sins, it casts itself at the footstool of his mercy, as a suppliant for mere pardon; and welcomes him, as the glorious, efficacious, and all-sufficient Atonement for sin, and Intercessor for sinners. With these views, and affections, it yields itself up to him, as a free-will offering, with an entire confidence in all that he hath taught, and done, and suffered, in the Divine character of Mediator between God and man. In this manner it becomes his, here and for ever.

As his, it is acknowledged, in accordance with that glorious promise: *Him that cometh unto me will I in no wise cast out.* As his, its *name is written in the Lamb's Book of life;* and it is invested with a sure, indefeasible title to all the promises of the Gospel; particularly to those, recorded in the 2d and 3d chapter of the Apocalypse; and to *the inheritance, which is undefiled, and fadeth not away.*

It has been often debated, whether mankind are justified, in the full and proper sense, in this world, or in that which is to come. To the great question, concerning the manner of our justification, this point appears to me to be of little importance. Whenever a man thus gives himself into the hands of Christ, he becomes his, in the sense of the Covenant of Redemption; and his title to justification, in this character, is complete. Whenever, therefore, he enters into the future world; and appears before the Judge of the quick and the dead; he comes, in a character acknowledged in the Covenant of Redemption, with a title to acceptance, founded on the promise of the Father, contained in that covenant; and pleads, with certain prevalence, his own performance of the condition, on his part; viz. faith in the Redeemer; as having brought him within the limits of that promise. As Christ's, then, and as Christ's alone; as one of his seed; he is acknowledged, forgiven, acquitted, and received to the heavenly inheritance.

It is here to be observed, and always to be remembered, that *the believer is not thus accepted on account of his faith, considered as merit; or as furnishing a claim in the nature of a work of righteousness, sufficiently excellent to deserve justification, either wholly, or partially.* Considered in every other light, except that of being one of Christ's children; or, in other words, considered merely as a moral being; he merits nothing at the hand of God, but anger and punishment. If he were to be *judged according to his works, in this sense*, he would be ruined. For although many of his actions are, in a greater or less degree, really virtuous; yet his sins, also, are many and very great; enhanced by all the light which he has enjoyed, the grace which he has received, and the covenant which he has made. In this case, he would come before God, as a mere subject of Law; *no jot or tittle* of which has ceased to bind him with its original obligatory force, or to demand from him, with all its original authority, exact obedience. Such obedience can, here, be the only possible ground of justification; and this obedidience was never rendered by any child of *Adam.*

II. *I will endeavour to show the propriety, with which Faith is constituted the means of our justification.*

It has been already shown, that we are not justified by faith, because it renders us deserving of this favour at the hand of God. Still there is, I apprehend, an evident propriety in constituting faith the means of our justification. If returning sinners are to be justified at all; it will, I suppose, be acknowledged, that it must be proper

for God to justify them, *in such a manner, as shall most contribute to his glory, and their good.* This I shall endeavour to prove to be the real consequence of the manner, in which they are actually justified.

*It contributes peculiarly to the glory of God,* in the following, among other particulars.

1st. *It is a dispensation of Grace merely.*

Every thing, pertaining to this dispensation on the part of God, is the result of mere sovereign, unmerited love. This attribute, thus considered, is by the divine writers every where spoken of, as the peculiar glory of the Divine character. Whenever they have occasion to mention it, they rise above themselves; utter their sentiments with a kind of rapture; and adopt the style of exclamation, rather than that of sober description. *Who art thou,* says *Zechariah, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings; crying, Grace, grace, unto it. Behold, what manner of love,* says St. John, *the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! For this cause,* says *St. Paul, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Having predestinated us,* says the same Apostle, *unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace; wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: In whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Praise the Lord,* says *David, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!* In this manner the subject is always considered, and always spoken of, by the divine writers. I shall only add, that the Angels themselves appear to entertain similar thoughts concerning it; as was abundantly manifested, when, at the birth of the Saviour, they sung, *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth Peace; Good-will towards men.*

All men will probably agree, that love, exercised towards enemies, is the fairest and most illustrious specimen of good-will, of which we have any knowledge. Exercised by God towards sinners, not only his enemies, not only lost and ruined, but eminently vile and guilty enemies, it is certainly seen in its consummation. In justifying mankind through faith in the Redeemer, this manifestation of love is seen in its fairest and most finished form. All the previous steps, indispensable to its accomplishment, and beyond measure wonderful, were dictated, and carried into execution, by mere grace. By mere grace, when all these things are done, is the sinner accepted, without any merit of his own; and only in the character of one, who has confidentially given himself to Christ.

In this dispensation, then, this most glorious attribute of God is seen in the fairest light.

2dly. *It is fitted to produce the greatest degree of gratitude in man.*

In Luke vii. 40, we are told, that *Simon* the Pharisee, at whose house our Saviour was sitting at meat, censured him for suffering a poor, sinful woman to anoint him with precious ointment; and that Christ said unto him, *Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.* And he saith, *Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered, and said, I suppose, that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.*

From this passage of Scripture it is evident, that forgiveness confers a peculiar obligation, and inspires peculiar gratitude; and that this obligation and gratitude are great, in proportion to the number, and guilt, of the sins which are forgiven. But the scheme of justification by faith, being a scheme of mere forgiveness, without any consideration of merit on the part of those who are justified, and the number and guilt of the sins forgiven being very great; *the fairest foundation is laid*, here, for the highest possible gratitude. This emotion, and its effects, will extend through eternity; and constitute no small part of the character, usefulness, and felicity, of the Redeemed; and no small part of their loveliness in the sight of their Creator. Had mankind been justified by works either wholly or partially, this affection, and its consequences, could not have existed in the same manner, nor in the same degree.

3dly. *This dispensation is eminently honourable to Christ.*

*St. Paul*, in 1 Corinthians, quoting from *Jeremiah* 9th, delivers it as a precept, intended universally to regulate the conduct of mankind, that *he who glorieth should glory only in the Lord;* because *he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* In conformity to this rule of conduct, we find it asserted in the 5th of the Revelation, that the *four living Ones, and the four and twenty Elders, fell down before the Lamb, and sung a new song; saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain; and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God Kings and Priests: and we shall reign on the earth.* Immediately upon this, the whole host of heaven exclaimed with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Finally, both heaven and earth are exhibited as uniting with one voice in this sublime ascription: *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.* At the close of this act of celestial

worship, the four living Ones subjoin their solemn *Amen!* This passage needs no comment.

In the scheme of justification by faith it is evident, that all the glory of saving sinners from endless guilt and misery, and of raising them to immortal happiness and virtue, centers in the Redeemer; and that, according to his own declaration, he is eminently glorified, in this manner, in those, who are given to him by the Father as his children. John xvii. 10.

4thly. *It is honourable to God, that he should annex justification to virtue, and not to any thing of a different nature.*

Faith is *virtue.* But the works of mankind, wrought before the existence of faith in the soul, are in no sense virtuous. Faith, also, is the *commencement of virtue in man.* It is highly honourable to God, that he should annex justification to the first appearance of virtue in the human character. In this manner, he exhibits, in the strongest degree, his readiness to forgive, accept, and save, the returning sinner; the greatness of his mercy, which, at the sight of the returning prodigal, hastens to meet, and welcome him, guilty as he has been, in all his rags, and dirt, and shame, merely because he has set his face in earnest towards his father's house; and the sublime and glorious pleasure, which he enjoys in *finding* a son, *who was lost* to all good, and in seeing him, once *dead, alive again* to useful and divine purposes.

5thly. *It is honourable to God, that he should annex our justification to that attribute, which is the true source of virtuous obedience.*

That faith is the true source of such obedience, in all its forms and degrees, is so completely proved by *St. Paul* in the xi. Chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, as to admit of no debate, and to demand no further illustration. He declares directly, and universally, that *without faith it is impossible to please God* in any act whatever; and that *by faith Enoch* in his obedience *pleased God.* By necessary consequence all the other worthies, mentioned in that chapter, pleased him also for the same reason. On account of their faith, he teaches us, that *God is not ashamed to be called their God;* and *has prepared them a city;* an everlasting residence, a final home, in the heavenly world. Finally, he shows, that faith is the real and only source of that obedience, which is the most arduous, self-denying, honourable to the human character, and eminently pleasing to God. In a word, every thing truly glorious, which can be achieved by man, he declares, in the latter part of the chapter, to be achieved by faith alone.

*St. John*, also, assures us, that *faith is the victory, which overcometh the world;* the real power, by which, on our part, temptations are effectually resisted, snares escaped, enemies overthrown, and heaven with all its blessings finally won.

While this scheme of justification, therefore, strips man of all pretensions to merit, and gives the whole glory of his salvation to his Maker, it furnishes the most efficacious means, and the most

absolute assurance, of his future obedience, his perpetual improvement in holiness, and his certain advancement towards the best character, which he will ever be capable of sustaining. The obedience, springing from faith, is voluntary, filial, and lovely. All other obedience is mercenary, and of no moral worth. It will not be denied, that a dispensation, of which these are the consequences, is highly honourable to the character of its Author.

Every person, who has attended to these observations, must clearly see, that they illustrate, in various particulars, *the usefulness of this dispensation to man:* all of them plainly involving personal advantages, and those very great, to the justified; as well as peculiar glory to the Justifier. Two additional observations will contain all that is necessary to the further illustration of this part of the subject.

1st. *This dispensation is profitable to mankind, as it renders their justification easy and certain.*

Had our justification been made to depend on a course of obedience, it is not difficult to see, that we should have been involved in many perplexities and dangers. Repentance at late periods of life would, particularly, have been exceedingly discouraged. It will not be denied, that such repentance exists; nor, however rare we may suppose it, that it exists, upon the whole, in many instances. Nor can any man of common humanity avoid wishing, that the number of these instances may be greatly increased. Such instances exist even on a dying bed; and, as there is good reason to believe, in considerable numbers. But how discouraging to such persons would it be, to know that their Justification was dependent on their own obedience! Is there not every reason to believe, that most, if not all persons, in these circumstances, would be discouraged from every effort, and lay aside the attempt as hopeless. What, in this case also, would become of children, dying in their infancy? and what of persons, perishing by shipwreck, the sword, and innumerable other causes, which terminate life by a sudden, unexpected dissolution?

Further; if Justification were annexed to our obedience; how should the nature and degree of obedience be estimated? How pure must it be? What degree of contamination might it admit, and still answer the end? With what degree of uniformity must it be continued? With what proportion of lapses, and in what degree existing, might it be intermixed? These questions seem not to have been answered in the Scriptures. Who is able to answer them?

Again; from what principle in man shall this obedience spring? From the mere wish to gain heaven by it? Or from a virtuous principle? From a virtuous principle; it will probably be answered. In reply, it may be asked, From what virtuous principle? I presume, it will be said, From love to God. But it ought to be remembered, that, where there is no confidence, there is no love,

and therefore no virtue. Consequently, there is, in this case, nothing, from which virtuous obedience can spring. How, then, can man be justified by his obedience?

But, by annexing Justification to faith, God has removed all these difficulties and dangers. It is rendered as easy, as possible, to our attainment. For *the first act of virtuous regard to God, which is exercised, or can be exercised, by a returning sinner, is faith.* If, then, he can do any thing, which is praiseworthy, or virtuous, he can exercise faith. As his Justification is inseparably annexed to this exercise by the promise of God; it is as certain, as that promise is sure.

2dly. *This scheme provides most effectually for the happiness of man.*

Evangelical faith is an emotion of the mind, delightful in itself, and delightful in all its consequences. Faith is a *well-spring of water* flowing out *unto everlasting life.* All the streams, which proceed from it in the soul of the believer, are sweet, refreshing, and life-giving. Faith, fixing its eye on the unmerited and boundless goodness of God, sees, in the great act of Justification, faithfulness, truth, and mercy, displayed, to which it neither finds, nor wishes to find, limits. The soul, in the contemplation of what itself has been, and what it has received, becomes fitted, through this confidence, for every thing excellent, and every thing desirable. Peace, and hope, and love, and joy, rise up spontaneously under its happy influence; and flourish, unfavourable as the climate and soil are, with a verdure, and strength, unwithering and unfading. All the gratitude, which can exist in such a soul, is awakened by the strong consciousness of immense and undeserved blessings; and all the obedience prompted, which can be found in such a life. Good, of a celestial kind, and superior to every thing which this world can give, is really, and at times delightfully, enjoyed; and supporting anticipations are acquired of more perfect good beyond the grave.

This extensive and all-important subject is the principal theme of St. Paul's discourse in the seven first chapters of the Epistle to the *Romans.* In the 8th chapter, he derives from it a train of more sublime and interesting reflections, than can be found in any other passage of Scripture, of equal extent. He commences them with this triumphant conclusion from what he had before said: *There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* He then goes on to display, in a series of delightful consequences, the remedial influence of the Gospel upon a world, ruined by sin, and condemned by the law of God; marks the immense difference between the native character of man, as a disobedient subject of law, and his renewed character, as an immediate subject of grace; and discloses, particularly, the agency of the Spirit of truth in regenerating, quickening, purifying, and guiding the soul, in its progress

towards heaven. The consequences of this agency he then describes with unrivalled felicity and splendour; and animates the Universe with anxious expectation to see the day, in which these blessed consequences shall be completely discovered. On the consequences themselves he expatiates in language wonderfully lofty, and with images superlatively magnificent. *What shall we*, then, *say to these things?* he exclaims: *If God be for us, who can be against us? He, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also, freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Such ought to be the thoughts of all, who read, and peculiarly of all, who have embraced, the Gospel. Here we find the true application of this doctrine; the proper inferences to which it conducts us. We could not have originated them; but we can imbibe and apply them. A scene is here opened without limits, and without end. On all the blessings, here disclosed, eternity is inscribed by the Divine hand. We are here assured an eternal residence, of immortal virtue, immortal happiness, and immortal glory; of intelligence for ever enlarging, of affections for ever rising, and of conduct for ever refining, towards perfection. Whatever the thoughts can comprehend; whatever the heart can wish; nay, abundantly *more than we can ask, or think*, is here by the voice of God promised to every man, who possesses the faith of the Gospel. When we remember, that all these blessings were purchased by the humiliation, life, and death, of the Son of God; can we fail to exclaim in the language of heaven: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing! Amen.*

# SERMON LXVIII.

JUSTIFICATION.—RECONCILIATION OF PAUL AND JAMES.—IN WHAT SENSE MANKIND ARE JUSTIFIED BY WORKS.

JAMES ii. 24.—*Ye see then how that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*

THIS passage of Scripture, together with a part of the context, is directly opposed in terms, to the doctrine, which has been derived, in several preceding discourses, from *St. Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*. Infidels, and particularly *Voltaire*, have seized the occasion, which they have supposed themselves to find here, to sneer against the Scriptures; and have triumphantly asserted, that *St. James* and *St. Paul* contradict each other in their doctrine, as well as their phraseology. Nor are Infidels the only persons, to whom this passage has been a stumbling-block. Divines in a multitude of instances, have found in it difficulties which they have plainly felt, and have differed, not a little, concerning the manner in which it is to be interpreted.

Some divines, among whom was the first President *Edwards*, have taught, that *St. James speaks of justification in the sight of men only;* while *St. Paul speaks of justification in the sight of God.* This, I think, cannot be a just opinion. It is plain from the 21—23 verses, that *St. James* speaks of the same justification, which *Abraham* received, and in which *his faith was counted unto him for righteousness.* It is also evident from the 14th verse, in the question, *can faith save him?* From this, it is plain, that *St. James* had his eye upon the justification, to which salvation is annexed.

Another class of divines have supposed, that *St. James teaches, here, a legal or meritorious justification; and that this is the true doctrine of the Gospel concerning this subject. St. Paul*, they therefore conclude, is to be so understood as to be reconcileable with *St. James* in this doctrine.

Others, among whom are the late Bishop *Horne*, and Dr. *Macknight, suppose, that St. James speaks of our justification, as accomplished, in part, by those good works, which are produced by faith; and this they maintain, also, to be the doctrine of St. Paul.* It is believed, that this scheme has been already proved to be unsound, but as it is true that *St. James* really speaks of such works, it will be necessary to consider the manner, in which he speaks of them, more particularly hereafter.

Others, and among them *Pool*, (whose comment on this chapter is excellent) suppose, that *St. Paul speaks of justification properly so called;* and *St. James of the manifestation, or proof of that justification.* That, in this sense, the Apostles are perfectly reconcileable, I am ready to admit; but am inclined to doubt whether this is the sense, in which *St. James* is really to be understood.

By this time it must be evident to those who hear me, that there is some real difficulty in a comparison of this passage of *St. James* with the writings of *St. Paul.* By a real difficulty I do not intend, that there is any inconsistency between these two Apostles: for, I apprehend, there is none: but I intend, that there is so much obscurity in this discourse of *St. James*, as to have led divines of great respectability and worth to understand his words in very different manners; and prevented them from agreeing, even when harmonious enough as to their general systems, in any one interpretation of the Apostle's expressions. Even this is not all. *Luther* went so far, as, on account of this very chapter, to deny the inspiration of *St. James:* and one of *Luther's* followers was so displeased with it, as to charge this Apostle with wilful falsehood.

*St. James* has been called, with more boldness than accuracy, a writer of paradoxes. This character was, I presume, given of him from the pithy, sententious, and figurative manner, in which he delivers his thoughts. This manner of writing, very common among the *Asiatics*, seems to have been, originally, derived from their poetry. The most perfect example of it in the poetical form, found in the Scriptures, is a part of the book of Proverbs, commencing with the 10th chapter, and ending with the 29th. Here, except in a few instances, there is no connexion intended, nor formed, between the successive sentences. The nine first chapters, the book of Job, and Ecclesiastes, are examples of the nearest approximation to this unconnected manner of writing, in *continued discourses*, which the Scriptures exhibit. In all these, although a particular subject is pursued through a considerable length, yet the connexion will be found, almost invariably, to lie in the thought only. The transitions are, accordingly, bold, and abrupt; and frequently demand no small degree of attention, in order to understand them. Probably, they are more obscure to us, than they were to the *Asiatic* nations, to whom this mode of writing was familiar: since we have learned from the *Greeks* to exhibit the connexions, and transitions of thought, universally, in words; and to indicate them clearly in the forms of expression. The wisdom of the son of *Sirach*, is another example of the same nature, which may be fairly classed with those already mentioned; as may also the prophecy of *Hosea.* Every person, in reading these writings, must perceive a degree of obscurity, arising, not only from the concise and figurative language, but from the abruptness of the transitions also, which at times renders it extremely difficult to trace the connexion of the thoughts.

*St. James* approaches nearer to this manner of writing, than any other prosaic writer in the Old or New Testament. He is bolder, more figurative, more concise, and more abrupt. That there should be some difficulty in understanding him satisfactorily ought to be expected as a thing of course. We cannot wonder, then, that different meanings should be annexed to the writings of this Apostle: and from this source only, as I believe, are these different interpretations derived.

Having premised these observations, of which the use may easily be perceived, I now assert, *that both Apostles speak of the same justification; that which is before God; and that they are perfectly harmonious in holding the doctrine of justification by faith without works.*

To elucidate the truth of this assertion, it will be necessary to remark, that there are two totally different kinds of faith spoken of in the Scriptures; one, a speculative belief, or mere assent to probable evidence; the other, the confidence, which has been already described in these discourses. From the former of these, obedience to God never sprang, and cannot spring. The latter is the source of all obedience. As both, however, are called by the same name, each has, in its turn, been declared to be the faith to which justification is annexed. To both, this character was challenged in the days of the Apostles. That doctrine of *Antinomianism*, from which the name is derived, began in the days of the Apostles; viz. *that we are released by the Gospel from obedience to the Law.* Of course, whoever embraced this doctrine believed his faith to be sufficient for his justification, without any works of righteousness. Against this error, I believe with *Doddridge* and others, the Apostle *James* directed this discourse. The question which he discusses, was not *whether we were justified by evangelical faith only; or, partially by that faith, and partially by the works which it produces;* but *whether we are justified by faith, in its nature unproductive of works;* viz. *mere speculative belief; or, whether we are justified by faith of the Gospel, from which all works of righteousness flow, of course.* That this account of the subject is true, I shall now attempt to prove.

*St. James* introduces his discussion of this subject with these questions: *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?* In the original it is η πιστις; *the* faith, which the man declares himself to have; or, as it is correctly rendered by *Macknight*, and various other commentators, *this* faith, *can this faith save him?* Undoubtedly it *can*, if it can justify him; but this is no where asserted in the Scriptures. The justifying faith of *St. Paul* is *the faith which worketh by love;* the faith of *the heart*, with which alone *man believeth unto righteousness.*

The uselessness of this faith St. James then elucidates by an allusion to that inactive and worthless benevolence, so celebrated, in

modern times, by *Godwin* and other philosophers. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace : be ye warmed and be ye filled: notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body : what doth it profit?* As this philanthropy is not only of no use, and therefore of no value, but a reproach to him who professes it, because his conduct gives the lie to his professions ; so the faith of him, who believes the Gospel, and whose life is not governed by the all-important doctrines and precepts, which it contains, is equally destitute of worth, and equally reproachful to his character. In the words of the Apostle in the following verse, *it is dead, being alone ;* or, as in the Greek, *by itself.*

In the 18th verse, he proves in the strongest manner, that such a faith is not the faith of Christians. *Yea, a man*, that is, a Christian; *may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works : shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* Christ taught the great doctrine, that Christians *were to be known by their fruits only ;* and that these were the true, regular, and invariable, proofs of that faith, by which they were constituted Christians. But the faith, which is without works, is incapable of having its existence proved at all. This, therefore, cannot be the faith of Christians.

In the 20th verse he exhibits this subject in a manner, which puts the account here given beyond all reasonable controversy. *Thou believest that there is one God ; thou doest well : the devils also, believe, and tremble.* The devils, (τα δαιμονια, the dæmons) are, and by *St. James* are declared to be, the subjects of speculative belief; but it will not be pretended, that they can be the subjects of justifying faith. But *St. James* teaches us, that the faith, of which he is speaking, is the same with that of the devils.

With the same precision he exhibits the same thing under a different form, in the 20th verse. *But wilt thou know, O vain man! that faith without works is dead?* The Greek words for *vain man* are ανθρωπε κενε ; properly rendered *false man*, or *hypocrite.* But surely the faith of the hypocrite is not the faith of the Gospel. The last part of this verse would be better translated *a faith without works is dead*, that is, *a faith which is without works.*

In the four following verses, *St. James* illustrates this subject by a comparison of this faith of the hyprocrite with that of *Abraham. Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the Altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God : and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. And he was called the Friend of God. Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

In this part of the chapter all the real difficulty lies. To explain the true import of it, let *St. James* be his own commentator. After

having given us the declaration, that *Abraham* was justified by works, when he *offered*, or, as in the original, *lifted up, Isaac upon the Altar*, and taught us, that *faith co-operated with his works;* and *that by works his faith was perfected;* he says, in the 23d verse, that *the Scripture was fulfilled*, that is, *confirmed, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.* This passage of Scripture is found in the xv. chapter, and the 6th verse of Genesis. That, which he believed, was these two declarations: *This shall not be thine heir;* viz. *Eliezer of Damascus; but he, who shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir: and again; Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.* Confiding in these promises was that act of *Abraham*, concerning which it is said, in the following verse, *He believed in Jehovah, and he counted it to him for righteousness.* The act of lifting up *Isaac* on the Altar, by which, *St. James* says, *this Scripture was fulfilled*, that is, *confirmed*, existed more than twenty years afterwards. In what sense, then, did that act confirm this declaration of Scripture? Plainly in this: it showed, that the faith of *Abraham* was the genuine faith of the Gospel; a real, operative confidence in the promises of God. This it showed in a very forcible light, because the obedience was singularly great and self-denying. Exclusively of this, it will be difficult to find any sense, in which the declaration can be true. That *Abraham* was justified by faith, and by that very act of faith here recited, is expressly declared by *St. Paul*, Romans iv. and Galatians iii.; and therefore cannot be disputed. It is of no significance, here, to say, that *Abraham's justification was not completed in this world, but will be completed at the final trial; or that it was completed, when he entered the future world.* It is sufficient for the present purpose, that his title to justification was complete, and certain, when *his faith was counted to him for righteousness.* Had he then died, he would have been accepted of God; his sins would have been forgiven; and his soul made happy for ever. He, to whom all things are present, makes no new determinations concerning this subject. It is plain, then, that an act of obedience, existing a long time afterwards, could not alter that, which was past; nor affect in any manner the justification of *Abraham*, which was already made certain.

From these observations it is, I trust, sufficiently evident, that this very case put by *St. James*, is a clear proof, unless we are willing to deny an express declaration of Scripture, as quoted by him, and written by *Moses*, that we are not justified, either partially or wholly, by works, in the common meaning of that phraseology; and that the true doctrine of *St. James* is no other, than that we are not justified by a speculative belief which is without works; but by the faith of the Gospel *which worketh by love.*

This is further evident from the last clause of the 23d verse: *And he was called the friend of God.* That, which made him the friend of God, was his faith, his confidence in God. The act of offering *Isaac* could in no sense make him the friend of God; but was merely a signal and glorious proof of this confidence, and the friendship, which it involved, and produced.

If these observations be admitted as just, it will be unnecessary to dwell on the two remaining verses. The case of *Rahab*, in the following verse, is perfectly explained by that of *Abraham.* In the concluding verse, *St. James* solemnly repeats the great doctrine of this passage, which, by repeating it in three different instances, he clearly proves to be the main thing, on which he meant to insist, in these concise and emphatical words: *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also; or as I should render it, a faith without works*, that is, such a faith, as is without works. The meaning of *St. James* is not that Evangelical faith, when it is without works, is dead; for it cannot exist without producing good works; but that such a faith, as is unproductive of good works; viz. a mere, speculative belief; is dead; and like a corpse, from which the soul has fled, is absolutely useless, and loathsome to every beholder.

Having finished the remarks, which I proposed to make on this passage of *St. James*, I shall now proceed to show *the real influence of good works on the justification of mankind.*

1st. *When we confide ourselves to Christ, we do it according to his own terms.*

Among these, he has required us to *do all things whatsoever he has commanded us;* and *to walk as he also walked.* But his commands involve every good work; and his example has presented to us an universal system of good works, actually done by himself. To obey him, and to be like him, is therefore to perform every good work.

All this, also, he has required us to do voluntarily, faithfully, and alway. When, therefore, we confide in Christ, we surrender ourselves into his hands with a fixed intention, a cordial choice, of universal obedience, as our whole future conduct.

2dly. *The faith of the Gospel cannot exist without good works.*

To the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* I appeal as complete proof of this position. That principle in the soul, which produced the many, various, difficult, and exalted acts of obedience, recorded in this chapter, is beyond a debate the well-spring of all obedience. The connexion between these things is inseparable; and where the one does not exist, the other cannot. In this sense, then, a man is truly said to be justified by works; that he, who has the good works, which spring from the faith of the Gospel, will be justified; and he, who has them not, will not be justified. The title of the believer to justification is certain, and complete, so soon as he believes; because he will never cease

to believe; and his faith will never cease to operate in universal obedience. But were we to suppose a case, which never existed, and cannot exist; viz. that a man should believe with the faith of the Gospel, and should afterwards cease to perform good works; that man, undoubtedly, would never obtain justification. On the contrary, he would become a final apostate, and an outcast from the Kingdom of God. Thus have I expressed my own views of the doctrine, contained in this discourse of *St. James;* and shall only add, that this is equally the doctrine of *St. Paul*, of Christ, and of the whole Bible.

The observations, made in this discourse, naturally suggest the following

## REMARKS.

1st. *It is evident from this discourse of* St. James, *that no attribute, or principle, is of any value, except as it produces good works.*

By good works I intend here, and throughout this sermon, all acts of piety, benevolence, and self-government. Two of these, faith and benevolence, or things which claim to be faith and benevolence, are examined in form by *St. James;* viz. the faith of Antinomians, and the philanthropy of modern Infidels; and both are proved, irresistibly, to be useless, and worthless. What is true of these is true of all other principles, and opinions, sustaining the same general character. The end of all thinking, and feeling, is action. Whatever terminates not in this is a mere cheat; a mass of rubbish; a nuisance to ourselves, and to mankind. All the good, done in the Universe, is done by action. The most perfect and glorious principles, which belong to the Intelligent character; those, which constituted the bliss of paradise; those, which constitute the superior bliss of heaven; would be shorn of almost all their radiance, were they to cease from their activity. There is, I acknowledge, in the reception of truth, and the indulgence of virtuous affections, an inherent value; a delightfulness, inwoven in their own nature. The subject of them, if he were prevented by accidental circumstances from doing good, would, I acknowledge, still find real delight in the things themselves. But, were he to cease from doing good, when it was in his power, he would be stripped of all his virtue, and glory, and of almost all his enjoyment. *To him*, says *St. James*, *that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.* Good actions, only, are blessings to the Kingdom of God, and the only proofs of excellence of character.

In this great particular the Scriptures differ, boundlessly, from the favourite philosophy of modern times. Philosophy is satisfied with good words, and good wishes. The Scriptures, while they require these, demand with infinite authority, and indispensably to our acceptance with God, what is inestimably more valuable: good actions. Philosophy is satisfied to say, with coolness and composure, to the naked, starving wretch: *Depart in peace: be*

*thou warmed; and be thou filled.* The Scriptures, with a divine compassion for the sufferer, and with an equal concern for the true interest of him who possesses the means of relief, compel us, by infinite authority, and an infinite example, to clothe, to feed, and to bless, so far as is within our power, all the children of want and wo. Beyond this, they require all useful conduct, whether it immediately respects God, our fellow-creatures, or ourselves; and in this manner provide effectually for the happiness of mankind in the present world, and for their immortal good in the world to come.

2dly. *We here see, that the Scriptures, and the Scriptures only, furnish us with an effectual source of good works.*

No obedience is of any worth in the sight of God, or man, except that which is voluntary. *God loveth the cheerful giver;* and with his views those of mankind perfectly coincide. No obedience of our children or servants, no offices of our friends or neighbours, are of any value in our estimation, besides those which spring from the heart.

Of this obedience, the Scriptures inform us, Evangelical faith is the genuine spring, and the only spring, in the present world. The faith of the Gospel, as I have frequently had occasion to observe, is an affectionate confidence in the character of Christ; in which it surrenders itself to him on his own conditions, to be his, and to be employed wholly, and for ever, in his service. To the mind, under the influence of this spirit, Christ, together with all his pleasure, commands, ordinances, and instructions, becomes supremely delightful. Obedience to his commands is to such a mind, of course, voluntary, cheerful, and perpetual. Its faith is the commencement, and in a fallen creature the only commencement, as well as the future support, and soul, of the virtuous character.

In the experience of mankind this great truth has been abundantly proved. The faith of the Gospel, and that alone, transformed the first Christians from idolaters into saints; beautified their minds with every grace; and adorned their lives with every amiable action. Faith alone induced them boldly to renounce idols, and to worship the only living and eternal God. Faith withdrew them from impiety, deceit, fraud, cruelty, revenge, intemperance, and impurity; and rendered them pious, sincere, just, kind, forgiving, temperate, and chaste. Faith, finally, enabled them to overcome all worldly considerations, and affections; and to meet the rack, the faggot, and the cross, in the lively hope, the supporting assurance, of being approved by their Maker, and receiving from his hand a crown of immortal glory. In faith, and its effects, all real goodness of character in the race of man, all that is pleasing in the sight of God, has from that time, nay, from the beginning of the world to the present hour, been found. Nor is there any other entrance upon a life of virtue, nor any other foundation of persevering in real excellence.

In this all-important particular the Scriptures differ, infinitely, from the efforts of philosophy. Philosophy never made a single man really virtuous, or really amiable in the sight of God. *Cicero*, who was himself one of the greatest and most learned of the heathen philosophers, declares, in an unqualified manner, that they, so far as he knew, had never, even in a single instance, reformed either themselves or their disciples. Those, who are extensively acquainted with modern infidels, perfectly know, that their principles have been equally unproductive of any proofs of a virtuous character.

But the Scriptures, in the hands of the Spirit of God, have, in an endless multitude of instances, effectuated this glorious reformation of man. Long before the Canon was begun by *Moses*, a vast number of the human race, by embracing the doctrines and precepts, now published in the Scriptures, and then communicated by occasional Revelations, became the subjects of holiness, and the heirs of endless life. In all these, through every age, and every country, the same faith was the sole source of all their excellent and honourable conduct towards God, and towards mankind. *By faith*, says *St. Paul*, *Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death. By faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark. By faith Abraham, being called of God to go out into a place, which he should after receive as an inheritance, went out, not knowing whither he went.* This is the testimony of God himself concerning these worthies; and they in this respect are representatives of all the good men, whom the world has ever seen. Their faith was the faith of all such men; and all the virtuous conduct of such men sprang from the same source whence theirs was derived.

3dly. *From these things it is evident, that no religion, except Christianity, is of any value.*

The end of all doctrines and systems, which profess to be useful, is no other, than to make men virtuous. This end Christianity accomplishes; but it has been accomplished by no religion beside. While the religion of the Old Testament continued to be the only religion, established by God; it was in substance, and, as understood by the saints of that period, the same with the religion of the New. The chief difference was, that they believed in a Messiah, then future; and Christians believe in a Messiah, who has actually appeared. To them *the Gospel was preached, as well as to Abraham;* and they all *believed in the Lord, who appeared unto Abraham; and it was counted to them for righteousness.* With *Abraham they rejoiced to see the day of Christ afar off, and saw it, and were glad.* With *Job, they knew that their Redeemer lived, and that he would stand at the latter day upon the earth: and that, though, after their skin, worms would destroy their bodies, yet in their flesh they should see God.*

But there is not the least reason to believe, that any other reli-

gion has contributed, at all, to make men virtuous. Some truths have been found in every religion; but they have universally so abounded in falsehoods, and those falsehoods have been so absolutely believed, and obeyed, that no moral good appears to have been produced by them. On the contrary, they have warranted, and effectuated, evils, which cannot be measured; sins without bounds, and miseries without number. Those, who believed them most sincerely, and obeyed them with the greatest zeal, were among the most profligate of their votaries.

4thly. *It is evident from this discourse of St. James, that the religious character of all men is to be estimated by their works.*

*Shew me thy faith without thy works;* that is, *if thou canst;* and *I will shew thee my faith by my works.* A faith without works is nothing in the Christian scheme; and can be shown neither to ourselves nor to others. Let us, then, be just to ourselves, and try ourselves as God will try us hereafter. Let us place no confidence, no hope, in a faith, which is without works; nor ever dream that it is the faith of the Gospel. *By our fruits, he who searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins, has declared, our characters are to be known.* By this great rule of decision, then, ought every one to examine himself. *If our faith worketh by love;* if it *hath its fruit unto holiness; its end will be everlasting life:* if not, it will only become *the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.* In what a dreadful manner will the speculative believer be disappointed, to find that the foundation, on which he built, was nothing but sand! and how will he feel, when he sees that building swept away by the final tempest! How will it embitter even perdition itself, to have been in this world secure of eternal life, to have gone to the grave with peace and hope, believing ourselves to be true disciples of Christ, children of the covenant, and heirs of a blessed immortality; and to be first awakened out of this pleasing, flattering, delusive dream, by the condemning voice of the Judge! Oh, that we were wise; that we understood these things; that we would consider our latter end!

# SERMON LXIX.

JUSTIFICATION.—JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH DOES NOT LESSEN THE OBLIGATIONS, OR THE MOTIVES, TO OBEDIENCE.

ROMANS iii. 31.—*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*

IN a series of discourses, I have endeavoured to explain and prove the doctrine of Justification by faith without works.

Beside the direct opposition made to this doctrine, it has been opposed on account of its apprehended consequences, particularly, on account of this important consequence: *that it renders the Law of God useless, as a rule of obedience.* This objection *St. Paul* foresaw, and thought proper to anticipate, in this passage of Scripture: *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.* As if he had said, From the doctrine of justification by faith without works, which I have here asserted to be the true doctrine of the Gospel, I foresee it will be objected, that I render the law of God, as a rule of obedience, useless. This, however, is so far from being true, that the doctrine which I have taught, in reality establishes the law.

So peremptory a declaration of the Apostle might, one would think, have been amply sufficient to silence the objectors; and to have persuaded them, that this opinion of theirs was totally unfounded, and precluded the necessity of any future effort to establish the doctrine. The fact, however, has been otherwise. The objection has been maintained ever since the Apostle wrote. Even at the present time, it is a favourite and popular objection in the mouths of multitudes; and is alleged with triumphant confidence, in defiance, as I apprehend, of both reason and revelation.

It is remarkable, that the doctrine, contained in the objection, has been strenuously holden by men of totally opposite principles: those who assert, and those who deny, justification by faith. The former class are called *Antinomians;* the latter *Arminians;* with whom are united, in this particular, *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Pelagians*, and many others. It ought, however, to be observed, that *Arminius* himself, and many of his followers, have agreed in admitting without hesitation the doctrine of justification by faith.

As the scheme, opposed in the text, has been adopted by these two opposite classes of men; so it has been adopted with precisely contrary views. The former admit the doctrine *that the law is made void by faith*, as truth; and yet hold, that we are justified by faith. Of course, they consider it as a part of the design of God to make

the law void; and hold themselves to be under no obligations to obey its precepts. In their view, the fact, *that the doctrine of justification by faith makes void the law*, is so far from being an objection to it, that it is an original part of the Evangelical system; a thing, in itself proper, right, and good. The latter class bring this consequence as a direct, and formidable objection against the doctrine of justification by faith, from which, they suppose, the consequence certainly, and necessarily, flows. Were they right in this supposition, I cannot, I confess, answer the objection; nor should I know how, consistently with the Scriptures, to admit any doctrine, which renders the law of God useless, or in the least degree impairs its authority.

These two different modes of considering this subject, demand different answers. These I shall give under the following scheme: viz. *that the doctrine of justification by faith lessens not in any degree, but establishes in the most effectual manner,*

I. *The Obligations*, and,

II. *The Motives, to Obedience.*

Under the first of these heads, I shall direct my arguments against the *Antinomian*, and under the second, against the *Arminian* scheme concerning this subject.

I. *This doctrine does not lessen, but establishes, the Obligations which mankind are under to obey the law of God.*

In proof of this position, I observe,

1st. *The law is a transcript of the Divine character.*

By this I intend, *that to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves*, is to love God, and our neighbour, in the very manner in which He loves both: that is, so far as creatures are capable of resembling their Creator. In other words, it is to be perfectly benevolent. *Beloved*, says the Apostle *John*, *let us love one another: for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.* In this passage, *St. John* refers, as he does also in the 12th and 13th verses of the first chapter of his Gospel, to two observations of Christ: *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God: and this is life eternal; that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Every one that loveth, he here informs us, is thus born of God, and knows God*, in such a sense as is life eternal. On the other hand, he further declares, *that he who loveth not knows not God*, in this sense. Hence it is plain, that he who is not the subject of this love, is not a child of God, nor an heir of eternal life. Of course, he is not the subject of justification, nor of the faith, to which it is annexed. Finally, *St. John* asserts, that *God is love;* or that love is his whole moral character, and essence. He, therefore, who is not the subject of this love, is not like God; has not the same moral character; or, in other words, is not *renewed after the image of God.*

Again; the Apostle observes, in the 16th verse, *He who dwelleth*, or continueth, *in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Of course, he who does not dwell, or continue, in love, does not dwell in God, nor God in him.

But *love is the fulfilling of the law.* To fulfil the law, then, is *to be born of God, to know God, to dwell in God*, and *to have God dwell in us.* Not to fulfil the law is, of course, to be destitute of all these characteristics, and blessings. Thus the law expresses to us, and requires in us, the very same moral character, which is the essence, and glory, of God. That such a law should cease from any part of its obligatory force is plainly impossible.

2dly. *The law is a perfect rule of righteousness.*

It is perfect, *as it requires nothing but righteousness.* To love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, can never be in any degree, or manner, wrong. This will not be disputed.

It is perfect, *as it requires all possible acts of righteousness.* However high, however low, any moral being is, the law of God reaches, and controls, all his possible moral conduct. Angels on the one hand, and little children on the other, can do nothing which is good, which at the same time is not required by this boundless rule of rectitude.

It is perfect, *as it prohibits every thing sinful;* that is, every thing of the nature of moral evil. *Sin*, says the Apostle, *is a transgression of the law.* in this declaration is involved not only that every transgression of the law is sin, but that the *commandment is so exceedingly broad*, as to prohibit every thing, which is of the nature of moral evil. But we need no testimonies on this subject. A little consideration will make it evident, that *to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves*, is necessarily incompatible with the existence of sin in the heart, or life, of him, in whom this love is found; and that as *love worketh no ill to his neighbour*, so it works no ill towards God.

If, then, we are released by the doctrine of justification by faith from our obligations to obey the law, we are released from our obligations to conform to a perfect rule of righteousness; to a *law*, a *commandment*, which is absolutely *holy, just, and good.* Can God be supposed to consent to this release? Can it be rationally wished by man? Must it not be regarded as a dreadful calamity by every good man? To what would it amount? To nothing more, nor less, than being released from all obligations to be virtuous.

3dly. *This doctrine is completely disproved by Christ.*

He denied it to be any part of the end of his mission. *Think not, that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* That there may be no doubt concerning the connexion between the phrase, *the law and the prophets*, and the object here in view, let it be observed, that Christ, having recited the two great commands which I have mentioned, says, *On*

*these two hang all the law and the prophets.* If, then, he came not to destroy the law, and the prophets, but to fulfil them, it was certainly no part of the end of his mission to destroy, in any degree, the two commands, on which they are entirely suspended. He has declared the thing to be impossible. *Sooner*, saith he, *shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle, of the law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.* This is no other than a declaration, that God will sooner annihilate the whole creation, than consent to give up his law. Nor is this doctrine at all unbecoming the Divine character. To create new heavens and a new earth is a thing easy to him, and can be accomplished by a command. But were he to give up his law in any instance, and with respect to any being, he must recede from governing the Universe by a perfect rule, and in a perfect manner. This would be to deny himself: for it would be no other than declaring by a most solemn act, that he was willing, that the Universe should no longer be governed by a perfect rule; and that he would, henceforth, either not govern it at all, or govern it by an imperfect rule. The injury thus done to his character would be infinite; nor can any bounds be set to the mischiefs, which in such a case would accrue to the Universe.

4thly. *This doctrine is every where denied by St. Paul.*

In the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, *St. Paul* declares, that Christians *are not under law, but under grace.* The *Antinomians*, totally mistaking the meaning of this declaration, have supposed, that Christians are not under the law, *as a rule of obedience;* whereas the Apostle meant only, that they are not under the law, *as a sentence of condemnation.* In the very next verse he says, *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.* But not to obey the law is to sin. Again, in the 1st verse of the same chapter, he asks, *What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body.* Of himself, he says, *I delight in the law of God after the inward man; and with the mind I myself serve the law of God.* He also declares it to be the great end, for which *God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sin-offering, to condemn sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in Christians, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* If, then, Christians do not fulfil the righteousness of the law, that is, obey it, this great end of Christ's mediation must be frustrated. The same Apostle declares, that *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping the commandments of God: and that circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but faith which worketh by love: and that circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but a new creature.* From these three passages it is evident, among other things, that he, who *keepeth the commandments of God*, is the same person, in all instances, with him, who

is possessed of *the faith, which worketh by love*, and who is *a new creature*. So far, then, is faith from making void the law, that it is exhibited by the Apostle as the very spirit, with which its commandments are kept, and which thus becomes the means of establishing the law.

Finally; the same Apostle says, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. Holiness, every person at all acquainted with the Scriptures knows, is nothing but obedience to the law. Without this obedience, then, a person, who is the subject of faith, and of consequent justification, if we were to suppose such a case, would never *see the Lord*. These passages, which I have selected without any labour, are ample proof of the falsity of this doctrine. Without any labour also, many more might be easily added, which are equally explicit, and unambiguous, from every part of the New Testament. The decision of *St. James* has been heretofore recited, as it exists in one passage; but his whole Epistle, and the whole united voice of the Scriptures, is against this scheme. In truth, I am astonished, that it should have been adopted by any sober man, who has read his Bible.

Let me ask the *Antinomian*, from which part of the law he considers himself as released; or whether from the whole. Is he released from his obligation to love God? or to love mankind? or from restraining those passions, which, if indulged, will prevent him from loving either? Or is he released from them all? In the former case he is released from being virtuous in part. In the latter he is released from all virtue. In other words, the doctrine of justification by faith has become, to him, a license to hate, or forget, the God that made him; to hate, or disregard, his neighbour; and to give the reins to those passions, which, thus indulged, will conduct him to absolute profligacy.

II. *The doctrine of justification by faith does not destroy, or lessen, the* MOTIVES *to obedience.*

Those, with whom we have hitherto contended, it will be remembered, hold the doctrine of justification by faith; and admit this objection in its full force; while they believe that, instead of lessening the evidence of the doctrine, the objection, as well as the doctrine, is an original part of the Evangelical system. Those with whom we are now to contend, on the contrary, deny the doctrine of justification by faith; and allege this objection, as primary evidence of its falsehood. The argumentation, therefore, must now take a different course from that which has been already adopted; and, in most respects, proceed on different principles. The chief design, hitherto, has been, to take the doctrine of justification by faith as granted; because it is in fact granted by our antagonists; and with this admission, to show, that the law remains in full force, as an obligatory rule of obedience. The design will now be to show, that the objections against the doctrine, *that it*

*lessens the Motives to obedience*, is destitute of validity, because it is destitute of truth. For this purpose, I observe,

1st. *That the obedience, which precedes the existence of faith, is destitute of any virtuous character.*

*Without faith it is impossible to please God.* The external acts of conformity to the law of God are frequently called by the name of obedience; and for this reason only have I given them that name. But, in my own view, the Gospel considers them as utterly undeserving of such a title. They are, there, always exhibited as proceeding from *an evil heart of unbelief;* and we are decisively taught, *that out of the evil treasure of such a heart evil things only proceed.*

It is undoubtedly our duty *to lay hold on eternal life*, and a gross sin to be negligent of this duty. But it cannot be pretended, that the mere pursuit of this good, without any relish for its moral nature, and without any voluntary conformity to the will of God concerning it, is virtuous. In this case, it is pursued with the same spirit, and the same views, with which we labour to obtain property, office, or reputation; and the mind is no less selfish in the one case, than in the other. No man is more scrupulous, or more exact, in external religious observances, than the superstitious man. Yet no other person, beside himself, dreams that his observances are virtuous. The *Pharisees* with great care *tithed mint, anise, and cummin;* and this they did with an intention to procure immortal life by what they esteemed obedience. For the same end they washed their *hands, cups, pots*, and *other vessels; made long prayers; gave alms; fasted* often; and did many other things of an external nature with great care, and exactness. So exact, so scrupulous, were they in their outward religious conduct, that they were highly respected by the people at large, as good men. Still, they are pronounced by our Lord to be *a generation of Vipers, and children of hell.* All their external offices of religion, then, though directed, generally, at least, to the attainment of eternal life, and performed with the strong expectation of securing it to themselves, were utterly destitute of virtue; and failed, altogether, of rendering them acceptable to God.

*The young man*, who came to Christ to know *what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life*, appears, in his original character, to have been more than usually amiable: for *Jesus, beholding him, loved him.* The account which he gave of his own external obedience, appears to me to have been sincerely given. There is good reason to believe, that he really, and with uncommon care, had, in the external sense, obeyed the commands of the decalogue. Still, *he lacked one thing;* and that was *the one thing needful;* viz. real, or evangelical virtue.

From these examples, thus considered, it is evident, that men may proceed far, (it is difficult to say how far) in external obedience; and yet be destitute of the evangelical character, and of every

recommendation to God. Hence it cannot but be seen, that external religious observances, existing in the highest degree, and performed, primarily, for the purpose of obtaining eternal life, are not in themselves, nor for this reason, virtuous, nor recommendations to the Divine favour. If, then, the doctrine of justification by faith should in fact lessen the motives to this kind of obedience, as performed merely with these views, it cannot, therefore, with any truth be said to *make void the law;* or to lessen the motives to evangelical obedience.

The dictates of reason perfectly accord with those of the Scriptures concerning this subject. That service, which is emphatically called *mercenary*, or which, in other words, is performed solely for the sake of a personal reward, is never considered by mankind as being virtuous, however exactly performed. Hence the very term *mercenary*, though originally indicating nothing immoral, has, in the most common use, acquired a bad signification; and is customarily used, and regarded, as a term of reproach. Voluntary service, only, in which good-will is exercised about the employment, and towards the object, which it respects, is acknowledged by mankind to be virtuous. Those, *who love us, merely because we love them*, and *who do good to us, merely because we do good to them*, are considered by common sense, as well as by Christ, as no better than *publicans and sinners*. They may be, they usually are, convenient to us; and we may love them with the same spirit, with which they love us; but it is impossible for us rationally to esteem them virtuous in this conduct.

2dly. *The Obligations of the Law are not lessened by this doctrine; and therefore, the Motives to obedience, derived from this source, continue the same.*

The nature of the law, its rewards and penalties, and the character and authority of the Lawgiver, the relations which we sustain towards him, as creatures, and as subjects of law, are certainly in no respect changed by the scheme of Evangelical justification. If there is a hint of this nature contained in the Gospel, I have never been able to find it. Until such a hint shall be produced, I shall take it for granted, that there is none.

I know of nothing, of this nature, which can be alleged, even with plausibility, unless it is this: *that the believer, being justified by faith, and having his title to justification secured, from the commencement of faith in his mind; the penalty of the law becomes, to him, a nullity.* As I suppose this to be the chief thing aimed at by those who make the objection under consideration; and that in which the real difficulty is supposed to lie; I shall examine it with some degree of attention.

1st. *The penalty of the law exists as truly against the Christian, as against the sinner; although in a different sense.*

The law denounces its penalty against *every soul of man that doeth evil. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

But it will be said, that those, who hold the doctrine of justification by faith, hold, also, that of the final perseverance of the saints, and, by consequence deny, that the penalty of the law will ever be executed on any of those, who become the subjects of faith. As this is fairly said, because it is said with truth; particularly, so far as I am concerned; I feel myself bound to give it a fair consideration.

Let it be observed then, that the security, which those, who are the subjects of faith, possess of eternal life, is not, in my view, connected with the first act of faith, in this manner: *that they are the subjects of this single act of faith, and will afterwards be the subjects of habitual and characteristical disobedience;* but in this manner: *that, having once exercised faith, they will continue thenceforth to practice an habitual and characteristical obedience, to the end of life. If a man abide not in me*, saith our Saviour, *he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire; and they are burned. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* In every one of these passages, the doctrine, which I have specified, is declared in terms so plain and unequivocal, as to need no comment. I shall only add one more, although multitudes might be easily added. *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* If *St. Paul*, whose words these are, felt himself, in any manner, exposed to be finally cast away, and considered it as absolutely necessary to make these efforts, in order to avoid this dreadful evil; and the Spirit of Truth dictated to him, this doctrine, and this conduct; nothing can be necessary to prove that all other Christians are, at least in an equal degree, exposed to the same evil; and need the same means, to insure their escape.

The perseverance of Christians is, in my own view, completely secured by the promise of God; but it is not secured by any compulsory, or coercive, act of almighty power. It is accomplished by means, and motives, employed for this purpose, and rendered effectual by their own effort, and the sanctifying energy of the Divine Spirit. If *they* were not to act; means would be furnished, and motives addressed to them, in vain. If they were not aided by the energy of the Divine Spirit; their efforts would be ineffectual.

The providence, word, and ordinances, of God, are these means. Among the motives, addressed to them for this purpose, are the promises of the Gospel, and the threatenings of the law; by which I intend every thing, contained in the word of God, calculated either to encourage or to alarm. The promises assure the Christian, that he shall persevere; but they do not assure him of this blessing, on the supposition that he ceases to obey, and yields

himself again *a servant to corruption.* On the contrary, they make it secure to him, conditionally in this sense: that he never turns back, and refuses, or neglects, *to walk any more with Christ:* that, on the contrary, he *yields himself a living sacrifice to God,* and thenceforth *walks in newness of life;* not perfectly, but habitually, and perseveringly unto the end. At the same time, they give him certain assurance, that by the grace of God he will be enabled thus to persevere. The threatenings, on the other hand, continually hold out to him the most awful denunciations against apostacy; the most solemn alarms concerning sloth, worldliness, and backsliding; and the most terrifying assurance, that, if he does not endure in his duty unto the end, in the manner specified, he cannot be saved. Thus while the event is made certain on the one hand, the means are made indispensable to it on the other. A well-known passage of Scripture will sufficiently illustrate this position. The Angel of the Lord assured *Paul,* that no one of his companions in the ship should perish. Yet *Paul,* afterwards, declared to the Centurion, and to the soldiers, that *except* the seamen *abode in the ship, they could not be saved.* In this part of the subject, thus explained, it will, I think, be impossible to find any thing, which lessens, in the view of a Christian, his motives to obedience.

In the mean time, it is to be remembered, the Christian is very rarely assured of his own salvation, because he is very rarely assured, that he is a Christian. Did he know, from the commencement of his Christianity, that he was certainly a Christian; I freely confess, that, in my own view, he would, in ordinary cases, be in no small danger of the evils, intended in this objection. In the infant state of Christianity in the mind, there is usually so little religious knowledge, so little strength of affection, so infirm a state of virtuous habits, and consequently so little stability of religious character; while there is also so much remaining sin, so riveted a predominance of evil habits, and so imperfect a prevalence of Divine grace over them; that this interesting discovery might, in my own view, prove, in no small degree, detrimental to him, by producing in his mind a dangerous quiet, and a mischievous, if not a fatal, security.

Such, however, is not the fact. The state of the Christian, either by the nature of things, or by the Divine constitution, or by both, is such, that in ordinary cases, though I acknowledge not always, the evidence, which he possesses of being a Christian, is in a good measure proportioned to the degree of his Christianity. When religion is feeble in the mind; when it is interrupted; when it is intruded upon by passion, appetite, temptation, care, error, or perplexity; its proofs become of course few, scattered, dim, and doubtful; and not unfrequently disappear. In the contrary circumstances, luminous seasons are enjoyed; evidences of grace multiply; and the soul is refreshed with alternations of hope, and peace, and joy. In his ordinary state, the utmost, of which the

Christian can boast, if I may rely upon the testimony of such Christians, as I have conversed with, is a prevailing hope, or a comfortable persuasion, that he is a disciple of Christ. In this situation, the hope, which he enjoys, allures, and encourages, him to obedience; while it also prevents him from despondency. Numerous fears at the same time intervene, alarm him concerning the uncertainty of his condition, and compel him to new and more vigorous exertions for the performance of his duty. Thus he is preserved alike from the dangers of both despondency and security; and is kept, so far as such a being can be supposed to be kept, in a progressive and improving course of obedience. His *path is like the shining light*, which, however dim and dusky, still *shines more and more unto the perfect day*.

Whenever a Christian becomes possessed of the faith, or hope, of assurance; he is also so far advanced in virtue, that he is prepared to feel the influence of virtuous motives; to realize the glory and excellency of his Creator and Redeemer; the loveliness of virtuous affections and conduct, and the hatefulness of sin; sufficiently to need little assistance from the influence of fear. *Perfect love casteth out fear;* and, in this state, a moral being is perfectly safe, without the aid of fear; perfectly inclined to do his duty; and perfectly guarded against the danger of backsliding. The assured Christian approximates towards this state; and is proportionally safe from the moral dangers of the present life.

In the like manner, the inhabitants of heaven are unalterably assured of their eternal perseverance in obedience; and in the same general manner are enabled to persevere. They love God too intensely, they delight too absolutely in virtuous conduct, they hate sin too cordially, and are too efficaciously influenced by the Spirit of grace, ever to forsake holiness, and relapse into sin. The assured Christian is chiefly kept alive in his obedience, in the same manner; and differs from them, principally, in the degree of his sanctification.

3dly. *The scheme of justification by faith in Christ furnishes new, peculiar, and very powerful motives to obedience.*

This position will not be questioned. The whole purpose, for which man is redeemed, is, so far as himself is concerned, *that he should walk in newness of life;* or that he should obey, anew, the law of God. To this great end he is now urged by motives, of which the law knew nothing. God, unasked and undesired, has sent his Son into the world, to redeem him. That glorious person became incarnate, lived, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, where he reigns, and intercedes, to accomplish his Salvation. The Spirit of grace has sanctified him; the Father of all mercies has forgiven his sins. He has become a child of mercy; an heir of the Divine favour; a member of *the family, which is named after Christ;* has his *name written in the Lamb's book of life;* and is entitled to a glorious immortality. When he remembers what he

was, and to what he was doomed; considers what he now is, and to what he is destined; and realizes these wonderful efforts, by which the infinitely happy change, made both in his character, and in his destiny, is accomplished; he cannot, as a Christian; the subject of an ingenuous, virtuous, and a grateful disposition; fail to feel, that motives wholly new, entirely peculiar, and wonderfully great, demand of him the most constant and exact obedience to the law of God. In this great particular *the law*, instead of being *made void*, is, according to the language of the Apostle, *established* by the scheme of justification by faith.

4thly. *The Faith of the Christian is the real source of Evangelical Obedience.*

The truth of this assertion has been already sufficiently proved; and can never be rationally questioned, while the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* remains a part of the Word of God. There it is shown, that faith is the direct source of obedience in all its forms, and all its degrees; of great attainments in Christian excellence, and of all attainments of this nature; of working righteousness, and inheriting promises; of pleasing God, and securing a title to the heavenly country. It is exhibited as the energy, by which we vigorously act in the service of God, patiently submit, and firmly endure. It is exhibited as *the victory, by which we overcome the world;* and *the shield, with which* we become able to *quench all the fiery darts of the adversary.*

Faith, then, is the spirit, the disposition, with which the Christian feels, and without which he cannot feel, the various motives to obedience, furnished by the law of God; motives presented by the excellence of the law itself, and of the government founded on it, the greatness of its sanction, and the glory of its Author. In an eminent degree, also, is it the spirit, which feels the peculiar motives, presented by the evangelical scheme of justification, and mentioned under the last head. These, it hardly needs to be observed, can be realized by no other disposition. The mind, under the expectation of meriting justification, either wholly or partially, by its own righteousness, proportionally recedes from just and affecting views of the excellency of Christ's righteousness, and its infinite importance to itself. Its sense of indebtedness, and its motives to gratitude, are proportionally lessened; and in the same proportion are diminished its inducements to obey, and its actual obedience. In this all-important sense, also, faith is the only real establishment of the law.

5thly. *Those who have holden this doctrine have been the most exact, and exemplary, observers of the law.*

If this be admitted, it must be allowed to put the question out of debate: for it cannot be denied, that the scheme of those, who obey the law most faithfully in their lives, is the scheme which most influences, and ensures, obedience. It is my business, then, to prove this position. For this purpose I refer you, generally, to

those discourses, in which I impeached the doctrine, and the conduct, of the *Unitarians*, and to the letters of *Dr. Fuller* on the moral tendency of the *Calvinistic* and *Socinian* systems. Your attention, at the present time, is requested, particularly, to the following arguments; which I shall only state, and leave to your consideration.

1st. *Their antagonists have extensively acknowledged this position to be true.* The confession of an adversary, in a practical case, may be usually assumed as decisive evidence.

2dly. *Those, who have held this doctrine, have by the same adversaries been censured, despised, and ridiculed, as being unnecessarily exact, and rigidly scrupulous in their observance of the duties of a religious life: While their adversaries have styled themselves, by way of distinction, liberal and rational Christians.* This could not have existed, had not these people, thus censured, been really exact, so far as the human eye could judge, in obeying the commands of God.

3dly. *The sermons of Ministers, holding this doctrine, have, with scarcely any exception, urged a stricter morality on their hearers, than those of their adversaries.* This any man may know, who will read both, even to a moderate extent. But this could not have taken place, had not the doctrine itself been peculiarly favourable to obedience.

4thly. *Those, who have holden this doctrine, have much more generally and punctiliously frequented the house of God, and observed the duties of the Sabbath, than their adversaries.* This fact is acknowledged by both parties; and therefore cannot be mistaken.

5thly. *Those who have holden this doctrine have, among Protestants, been almost the only persons, who have originated, supported, and executed, missions, for the purpose of spreading the Gospel among mankind.*

This fact cannot be questioned. I shall leave you to judge of the evidence, which it contains; and shall only observe, that the Papists have, indeed, prosecuted missions with great zeal; but that any one, who will read the histories of them, will readily discern the end of their efforts to have been the extension of power, and the accumulation of wealth; not the diffusion of religion.

6thly. *The Papists have very generally holden the doctrine of justification by works; while the reformers, almost to a man, hold that of justification by faith.* The comparative morality of these two classes of men cannot, here, need any illustration.

# SERMON LXX.

REGENERATION.—THE AGENT IN EFFECTING IT.—THE HOLY GHOST.—HIS CHARACTER.

TITUS iii. 5.—*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

IN the six preceding sermons, I have considered the *Manner, in which we become interested in the redemption of Christ, through free grace on the part of God, and on our part by evangelical faith. The Manner, in which we become possessed of this faith*, is the next great subject of investigation in a system of Theology.

The text, after denying that we are saved by works of righteousness, and declaring that our salvation is according to the Mercy of God, or through his free grace, asserts, *that this salvation is accomplished by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

There has been no small dispute among divines about the meaning of *the third phrase* in this passage: *The washing of regeneration.* Some have supposed it to denote *baptism*; and some to denote *the same thing with the following phrase: The renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Others have interpreted it in other manners. The second interpretation, which I have mentioned, is, in my apprehension, the true one. If *baptism* be intended, the passage is equivalent to the declaration of our Saviour to *Nicodemus: Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* He is *born of water*, or baptized, indispensably, in order to his admission into the *visible* Kingdom of God; and *of the Spirit*, indispensably also, in order to his admission into the *invisible* and *eternal* Kingdom of God. As his admission into the former is a symbol of his admission into the latter; so *baptism*, the means of his admission into the former, is a symbol of *regeneration*, the means of his admission into the latter. The difference between the two interpretations, which I have specified, will, therefore, be found ultimately to be immaterial: the one referring the phrase to the *type*, and the other to the *thing typified.* On either scheme, it must be admitted, that *the Apostle declares mankind to be saved by regeneration. Regeneration is, therefore, that event in the gracious providence of God, by which we become the subjects of faith, entitled to justification, and consequently heirs of salvation.*

In the consideration of this subject, two things are, in the text, presented to our inquiry:

I. *The Agent in this work;* and,

II. *The Work itself.*

The *Agent* in the work of renewing the human mind is declared in this passage, to be the Holy Ghost. Two things are naturally presented to us by the mention of a person, sustaining so important a part in the economy of salvation; a part, without which, all that has preceded would be wholly defective; and exist to no valuable purpose.

I. *His Character;* and,

II. *His Agency.*

The former of these shall now engage our attention; and my own views concerning it will be sufficiently expressed in this position.

*The Holy Ghost is a Divine Person.*

It is well known to those who hear me, that various classes of men, who profess to receive the Bible as the rule of their faith, have denied this proposition: viz. those who deny the Deity of our Saviour. The scheme of denial, however, has, in this case, been materially different from that in the other. In *that*, Deity was the object denied; in *this*, Personality. On all hands it is agreed, that the Holy Ghost is acknowledged by *Trinitarians* to be a *Divine Person;* but by *Unitarians* only a *Divine Attribute;* asserted sometimes to be *the Wisdom*, but, usually, *the Power*, of God. The chief subject of debate, therefore, between us and the *Unitarians;* that is, those with whom *we* have the chief concern: viz. the *Arians* and *Socinians;* is whether the Holy Ghost be a Person, or an Attribute.

In support of the *Trinitarian* doctrine concerning this subject, I observe,

1st. *The supposition that the Spirit of God is an Attribute renders the language of the Scriptures unintelligible and unmeaning.*

I have had occasion to take some notice of this fact formerly: it will be proper, however, to bring it up to view at this time. For example, then, it is said in Acts x. 38, *God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power.* This passage, read according to its real meaning, as interpreted by the *Unitarians*, would stand thus: *God anointed Jesus with the Holy Power of God, and with Power.* Romans xv. 13, *Now the God of peace fill you with all joy, and peace, in believing; that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost:* that is, *that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Power of God.* Verse 19, *Through mighty signs, and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God:* that is, *mighty signs, and wonders, by the power of the Power of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 4, *In demonstration of the Spirit and of power:* that is, *in demonstration of power, and of power.*

I will not intrude upon your patience by repeating similar passages any farther; as these are abundantly sufficient for my purpose. It cannot be necessary to bring proofs, that the infinitely wise God can never have directed his own Word to be written in

this manner. *No sober man* ever wrote in this manner. Nay, it may be confidently asserted, that such a mode of writing was never adopted by *any man, of any character whatever.*

2dly. *This scheme renders our Saviour's account of the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost unmeaning and incredible.*

This account is given us in various places; particularly *Matthew* xii. 31, *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

Concerning this I observe,

First, *that blasphemy cannot be directed against an Attribute.* Evil speaking, or speaking in a manner derogatory to character, can be directed only against a *percipient being;* because such a being, only, is capable of perceiving, or being in any way affected by, the evil intended. When mankind speak evil against the word, sabbaths, ordinances, works, names, or titles, of God, the evil is nothing, except as it is directed against God himself; because he alone, and not the things immediately blasphemed, can perceive, or be affected with, the evil which is spoken. In this manner all men have understood the subject.

It cannot be, therefore, that the *Unitarians*, when they read this passage, suppose the blasphemy in question to be directed against *the power of God.* They undoubtedly consider it as directed against God himself, through the medium of this attribute. I observe, therefore,

Secondly. *It is inconceivable, that blasphemy against God, universally, and in all other forms, should be forgiven; while the blasphemy against his Power can never be forgiven.*

In the attribute of Power there is plainly nothing, which is peculiarly sacred. It is shared alike by good and evil beings; and does not contribute at all to distinguish their character, as moral beings, or to render them either good or evil. It is, in no sense, the foundation, nor an ingredient, of worth or moral excellence. It is not, and cannot be, the object of love, nor praise. It is, therefore, incredible, and certainly inexplicable, that *all manner of blasphemy* against the whole character of God, particularly against his moral character, *should be forgiven;* and yet that blasphemy against this single natural attribute should never be forgiven. So far as the human understanding can discern, blasphemy against the *holiness, faithfulness, truth, goodness, and mercy*, of God, would be more expressive of malignant opposition, and of guilt, in the blasphemer, than blasphemy merely against his *power.* St. John has declared, that *God is Love.* That is, Love is the essence, sum, and glory of his moral character, and of himself. Blasphemy against this perfection, we should, I think, irresistibly conclude to be more heinous, than against any other attribute. But, according to this scheme, blasphemy against the power of God, a *natural attribute*, is so much more heinous than that, which is directed against all

the other divine attributes; nay, than that, which is directed against God, himself, and his whole character, including this very attribute of power, together with all others; as to be absolutely unpardonable; while all other blasphemy can, and will be forgiven. This, to say the least, is incredible.

If the Holy Ghost be a Divine Person, it would seem probable, that, if any sin is incapable of being forgiven, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost would be that sin. The Holy Ghost is God, employed in his most benevolent and wonderful work; that of restoring holiness to the soul of man; in his most glorious character, that of the Sanctifier; in a work, demanding the supreme gratitude of mankind; in a character, demanding their supreme reverence and love.

3dly. *That the Holy Ghost is not an attribute is evident from Acts* v. 3. *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart, to lie unto the Holy Ghost?*

A lie is a wilful deception; and can be told only to intelligent beings; because such beings only can perceive the meaning of the declaration, with which the liar intends to deceive; or, in other words, because such beings only can receive the lie at his mouth. A child perfectly knows, that he cannot lie to a tree or an ox; because they must be unconscious of what he says. But an attribute is as unconscious as a tree, or an ox; and, although God perceives all things, yet *his power* perceives nothing. A lie, therefore, cannot, in the physical sense of possibility, be told to the power of God.

4thly. *All the Attributes and Actions of a person are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.*

These are so numerous, and the varieties in which they are mentioned are so numerous also, that I shall only specify them in the most summary manner.

The Spirit of God is said *to strive. My Spirit shall not always strive with man.* Gen. vi. 3.

*To be sent forth.*

*Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created.* Psalm civ. 30. *God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son.* Gal. iv. 6. *The Comforter, whom I will send unto you from the Father.* John xv. 26.

*To move.*

*The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.* Gen. i. 2.

*To know.*

*The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is within him? Even so the things of God knoweth no one but the Spirit of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

Here let me ask, whether any man can conceive, that *Knowledge*, one essential attribute of God, can with any meaning be said to be an attribute of *Power*, which is another? Or whether power can, in any words that have meaning, be said to know any thing

The Spirit of God is said *to speak. He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.* John xvi. 13. *Then the Spirit said to Peter.* Acts x. 19. *The Spirit said to Philip.* Acts viii. 20. *Let him that hath an ear hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.* Rev. ii. 7. *The Spirit and the bride say come.* Rev. xxii. 17.

*To guide.*

*He will guide you into all the truth.* John xvi. 13.

*To lead.*

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* Rom. viii. 14.

*To help.*

*The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.* Rom. viii. 26.

*To testify.*

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God.* Rom. viii. 16. *But when the Comforter is come, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me.* John xv. 26.

*To reveal.*

*As it is now revealed unto his holy Prophets and Apostles by the Spirit.* Eph. iii. 5. *But the Comforter shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* John xiv. 26.

*To search.*

*The Spirit searcheth all things.* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

*To have a mind, or pleasure.*

*He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.* Rom. viii. 27.

*To prophesy.*

*He shall shew you things to come.* John xvi. 13. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.* 1 Tim. iv. 1.

*To intercede.*

*The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings, which cannot be uttered.* Rom. viii. 26.

*To give gifts.*

*For to one is given by his Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles,* &c. 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.

*To work in the soul of man.*

*All these worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man as he will.* 1 Cor. xii. 11.

*To work miracles.*

*Through mighty signs, and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.* Rom. xv. 19.

*To sanctify.*

*Ye are sanctified by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

*To quicken, or give life.*

*It is the Spirit that quickeneth.* John vi. 63. *Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* This is spoken of Christ. 1 Pet. iii. 18.

*To be pleased.*

*It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.* Acts xv. 28.

*To be vexed.*

*They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit.* Is. lxiii. 10.

*To be provoked, to be resisted, and to be grieved.*

That all these things should be said of an attribute, particularly of the attribute of power, will, I believe, be acknowledged to be incredible. That they should be dictated by God himself, and be the common language, in which this attribute, or any attribute, is described in his Word, is, I think, impossible. The language of the Scriptures is in all other cases, except those, in which it involves the Deity of the Son, and the Spirit, the language of common sense; the plain, artless language of nature. Why should it not be so here? Why should these two cases be uniformly, and solely, exceptions to that law, by which all the remaining language of Scripture is governed? Why should the Scriptural writers, whenever these subjects come before them, and *then only*, desert their native style; that which alone they use on all other occasions; and adopt one, totally new, and singular? Why should this be done by any writer? Such a case, it is presumed, cannot be found in the world, except in these two instances. Why should it be found in so many of these writers? Why should it be found in every Scriptural writer? Why, above all, should it be found in the language of Christ himself? Still more; whence could these writers be induced to depart from their customary style, whenever they had occasion to speak of these two subjects, and adopt such language, as renders their real meaning obscure; and not only obscure, but unintelligible; and not only unintelligible, but so utterly lost in the strangeness of their phraseology, that almost all their readers, and among them the great body of the wisest and best, have totally mistaken the real meaning, and derived from this very phraseology a meaning infinitely different? Can this be supposed to have been accomplished by the immediate Providence of God himself, when disclosing his will to mankind concerning subjects of infinite importance? Yet the *Unitarians* must suppose all this, or give up their scheme.

But, it is replied, *that* "*the language of the Scriptures is highly figurative; and that, among the figures used, bold Personifications hold a distinguished place. Among these, we find the attributes of God personified. For example, in the Proverbs of Solomon, particularly in the 8th chapter, we find the Divine* WISDOM *represented as a living Agent, possessing a variety of other attributes, and performing such actions, as are elsewhere ascribed to the Spirit of God.*"

This answer is the only specious one, which has been, or, it is presumed, can be, made to the arguments alleged above. I shall, therefore, consider it particularly; and reply,

In the first place, *that this personification of Wisdom is exhibited in animated and sublime Poetry.*

In such poetry, and in the loftier strains of eloquence, we are to look, if any where, for bold figurative language. The whole tenour of the discourse, here, proceeds from an enkindled imagination, and ardent feelings. In this state of mind, nature instinctively adopts figurative language, and bold images; and readily imparts life, thought, and action, to those objects, the contemplation of which has excited the peculiar elevation. With the writer, the reader, in all such cases, readily coincides. The dullest man in the dullest frame, easily catches the inspiration; and not only admits without hesitation the propriety of this language, and these images, but regards them as the only things which are proper, natural, and suited to the train of thought.

But on ordinary occasions, which furnish nothing to raise the mind above its common, cool level, such a mode of writing is perfectly unnatural; is at war with the whole tenour of thought; and can be the result of nothing but an inexplicable determination to write extravagance, and produce wonder. Not an example of this nature can be found in the Scriptures, unless it be this, which is now in debate.

Here, this language, and these images, are adopted, if they are in fact adopted at all, on the most ordinary occasions; inferring the most tranquil, even, uninterested, state of the writer; in the simplest narratives, and the most quiet discussions. Who would look for a personification in such instances as the following: *The Spirit said unto* PETER; *The Spirit said unto* PHILIP; *The Spirit caught away* PHILIP; *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly; It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us;* together with a vast multitude of others, exactly resembling these in their nature? If personifications are to be used in such cases; in what cases are they not to be used? And in what cases are we to use simple language?

To complete the strangeness of this representation, the Greek masculine pronouns and relatives are, in a multitude of instances, made to agree with the neuter substantive, Πνευμα, Spirit; a mode of personification, in all other cases, absurd; and here, to say the least, inexplicable.

Secondly. *The wisdom, spoken of in the Proverbs, is also a real Person, and not an attribute;* viz. *the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This has been the unwavering opinion of the great body of divines: of most, I believe, if not all, who are not *Unitarians.* Christ, as I apprehend, challenges this character to himself, *Matthew* xi. 19: *Wisdom is justified of her children. St. Paul,* in the 1 Corinthians, attributes it to him directly, when he says, *Christ the Wisdom of God;* verse 24, and in verse 30, when he says, *Who of*

*God is become unto us Wisdom; and in Col.* ii. 3, where he says of Christ, *In whom are hid all the treasures of Wisdom.*

That the attribute wisdom is not meant by *Solomon*, in this chapter, is completely evident from the 14th verse: *Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom.* Now it is impossible, that Wisdom should possess Wisdom: the possessor, and the thing possessed, being, by physical necessity, two things, distinct from each other. It is also evident, from the whole tenour of this chapter, as well as from several other parts of the discourse, in the beginning of this Book; particularly Chap. i. 20—33; on which, however, I can dwell no longer at the present time.

Thirdly. *Should it be still supposed, that the attribute of Wisdom, and not Christ, is intended by* SOLOMON; *the passage, even if it were not poetical, would not involve such absurdities and difficulties, as are involved in the supposition, that the Holy Ghost is an attribute personified.* An extensive comparison of these two subjects cannot be expected on the present occasion. Suffice it to say, that Wisdom is not said *to appear in a bodily shape; is not introduced, in form, as an agent in the common concerns of life; is not spoken of by one living being, when discoursing of another living being, as a third living being united with the other two in the transaction of real business; is never introduced in the Scriptures in plain prose, as speaking, hearing, commanding, guiding, sanctifying, and universally doing such things, as can be attributed only to a living person.* Yet it must strike every person, that, as Wisdom is an attribute, involving consciousness and perception, all these things, and others like them, might be attributed to it with much more propriety, than to the attribute of Power.

5thly. *The Holy Ghost is a Divine Person.*

There will probably be little dispute concerning this declaration among those who acknowledge that the Holy Ghost is a Person. The things, which are said concerning the Spirit of God, are so plainly such as evince infinite perfection, that few persons, probably none, who admit the Personality of the Spirit, will deny his Deity. Still, it will be useful, on this occasion, to exhibit several proofs of this truth.

1st. *The Names of God are given to the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures.*

*Now the Lord is that Spirit.* 2 Cor. viii. 17. This is a direct affirmation of *St. Paul*, that the Spirit is God.

*For who hath known the mind of the Lord? and who has been his Counsellor?* Rom. xi. 34.

*For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?* 1 Cor. ii. 16.

Both these passages are quoted from *Isaiah* xl. 13, *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? or, being his Counsellor, hath taught him?*

*And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* 2 Thess. iii. 5. Here the Person, addressed in prayer, is plainly a distinct person from those, mentioned by the names of God and Christ; and of course is the Spirit of God; to whom, throughout the Scriptures, the office of directing the hearts of Christians to their duty, is every where ascribed.

*Peter*, Acts v. 3, 4, says to *Ananias*, *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? Why hast thou conceived this in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* Here the Holy Ghost is called God by the Apostle in as direct terms as are conceivable.

Acts iv. 24, 25, *They lift up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is. Who by the mouth of thy servant* DAVID *hast said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?*

Acts i. 16, *Peter* says, *This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of* DAVID. The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the Lord God who spoke by the mouth of *David.*

2dly. *The Attributes of God are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.*

Eternity.—*Christ, who through the eternal Spirit once offered himself to God.* Heb. ix. 14.

Omnipresence.—*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Psalm cxxxix. 7.

*Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;* that is, the bodies of all Christians. 1 Cor. vi. 9.

Omniscience.—*The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

*Even so the things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

Holiness.—*The Holy Ghost; the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of holiness. Passim.*

Grace.—*Hath done despite to the Spirit of grace.* Heb. x. 29. See also *Zechariah* xii. 10.

Truth.—*The Comforter, the Spirit of truth.* John xiv. 17.

Glory.—*The Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you.* 1 Pet. iv. 14.

Goodness.—*Thy good Spirit.* Neh. ix. 20. *Thy Spirit is good.* Psalm cxliii. 10.

Power.—*The power of God* as exerted in working signs and wonders, is ascribed to the Holy Ghost throughout the New Testament.

3dly. *The Actions of God are ascribed to the Holy* GHOST.

Creation.—*By his Spirit he garnished the heavens.* Job xxvi. 13. *The Spirit of God hath made me.* Job xxxiii. 4. See also Acts i. 24, 25, compared with Acts i. 16.

*Working Miracles;* which, as you know, is either a suspension, or counteraction, of the laws of nature, or of the Divine agency operating conformably to those laws; and is, therefore, with peculiar evidence, an act of God himself. This, as I have already remarked concerning the power exerted in it, is throughout the New Testament ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

Inspiration.—*Holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* 2 Peter i. 21.

Giving life.—*It is the Spirit that quickeneth.* John vi. 63. *Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. *He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit, that dwelleth in you.*

Sanctification.—This also is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, appropriately, throughout the New Testament.

Instances of the same general nature might be easily increased in numbers, and the proofs might be easily multiplied to a great extent; but, as discourses, so extensively made up of detached passages of Scripture, are apt to be less interesting than could be wished, I shall desist.

4thly. *The Holy Ghost is a Divine Person because he is united with the Father and the Son in the Baptismal service and in the blessing, pronounced upon Christians by* St. Paul.

I have mentioned these subjects together, because they have some things in common. Yet there are, also, some things in which they differ. *Go, and teach all nations,* said our Saviour to his Apostles, *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,* says *St. Paul* to the *Corinthian* Church, and through them to all Christians, *and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*

In the commission, here given by Christ to his Apostles, it is impossible, that an attribute should, with propriety or meaning, be joined with persons; or a creature with one or more Divine persons. No absurdity can strike the mind with more force, than that Christ should direct the Apostles to baptize *in the name of God the Father, and of the Son, and of the Divine Power.* Nothing but impiety can, so far as I see, be contained in a direction to baptize in the name of God, and of a creature. What creature would dare to associate himself with God in such an act of authority, and thus presume to ascend the throne of his Maker? The same things are equally true concerning the form of blessing, above recited. Can *St. Paul* be supposed to have united either a creature, or an attribute, with the Eternal God in this solemn service? What blessings could either of these bestow? Both the creature and the attribute, considered by themselves, are in this view, nothing.

But this form of blessing is a prayer; and is addressed equally to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Can *St. Paul* have addressed a prayer either to an attribute, or to a creature?

Farther; the blessing prayed for from the Holy Ghost is communion, or fellowship. The request for this blessing involves, therefore, the declaration, that the Holy Ghost will, if the prayer be granted, be present with all those, for whom this communion is supplicated, and present with that influence, which is the source of spiritual and immortal life. In other words, the Holy Ghost is here exhibited as Omnipresent; and as every where possessing, and at his pleasure communicating, life here, as the commencement of life hereafter.

I shall conclude this discourse with observing, that the Divinity of the Spirit of truth furnishes Christians with the most solid foundation for gratitude, and joy. It will be seen, in the progress of these discourses, that He is the sum of all the moral blessings, introduced into this world by the Mediation of Christ. He sanctifies the soul; *brings it out of darkness into marvellous light;* improves it in holiness; conducts it through the temptations and dangers of this life; furnishes it with every gift and grace; prompts it to all virtue and excellence; and fills it with all spiritual enjoyment. For this great work he is abundantly qualified by the possession of infinite perfection; of all that is great, and all that is good. In this world, He commences, and carries it on. In the future world, He advances it to absolute perfection. Through the ages of eternity He will supply, enrich, and adorn, the soul with endless virtue, as the means of endless happiness and glory.

# SERMON LXXI.

## TESTIMONIES TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, FROM THE ANCIENT CHRISTIANS, JEWS, AND HEATHENS.

ISAIAH xlviii. 16.—*Come ye near unto me; hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time, that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.*

IN the last discourse I considered the *Personality and Divinity of the Spirit of God.* In a series of discourses, formerly delivered, I considered *the Divinity of Christ.* If the arguments, alleged in those discourses, are as conclusive, as they appear to me; they prove the existence of a TRINITY, or *three Persons in one God.*

The proof of this doctrine must unquestionably be derived from the Scriptures alone. But, when a doctrine of this extraordinary nature is presented to the mind, we naturally feel a strong curiosity to know the manner, in which the same doctrine has been regarded by others; particularly by such, as have lived before us; and peculiarly by the Ancient Members of the Jewish and Christian Churches. Nor is this a matter of mere curiosity. If the doctrine of the Trinity were, now, first discovered by mankind to be contained in the Scriptures, the words being supposed to have remained always the same; we should undoubtedly be surprised to find, that those passages, which, in our view, clearly contain this doctrine, had never been understood by others in the same manner, as by ourselves. Particularly, we should be inclined to doubt the soundness of our own interpretations, if we found the *Jews* construing such passages in the Old Testament, and the early Christians in the New, in a manner, totally different from ours. Were such the fact, we should, I think, very naturally suspect our own mode of construction: for we could not easily believe, that the Jewish Church was always ignorant of this doctrine, if it was really taught by the Prophets; nor the early Christian Church, if it was decisively communicated by the Apostles. It will be easily seen, that the *time*, in which those lived, to whom an appeal of this nature is made, must be important, as well as *the character of the witnesses.* The more ancient the witnesses are, other things being equal, the more valuable must be their testimony; and such testimony, if really ancient, and at the same time explicit and decisive, cannot fail of yielding material satisfaction to every rational inquirer.

Nor is the testimony even of Heathens concerning this subject, to be disregarded. If we find that the ancient Heathen nations, generally, or in most or all instances, independently of any ac-

quaintance with the Scriptures, have holden the doctrine of a *Triad constituting a Monad*, that is, *a Supreme God, who was One in one sense, and Three in another;* we cannot easily avoid the conclusion, that they derived this doctrine from a single source, and, that *that* source was Revelation. The doctrine plainly lies wholly out of the course, I think I may say, out of the reach, of human thought. There is, therefore, no reason, why we should believe it to have been invented by man. Much less is there any reason, to suppose it invented by men, in so many different nations, and in such circumstances of barbarism, as almost preclude the invention of any philosophical doctrine. The source of the doctrine must, therefore, have been one: and *that* a Revelation, existing before these nations were separated from each other.

In the text, a Person declares concerning himself: *I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God,* in the original *the Lord* JEHOVAH, *and his Spirit hath sent me.* The Person, speaking in this verse, is in the second verse called *Jehovah of hosts;* or *Jehovah God of hosts.* And in the twelfth verse he says, *I am he; I am the first: I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, my right hand hath spanned the heavens.*

*When I call unto them, they stand up together.* The person, speaking in the text, is, then, JEHOVAH OF HOSTS; *the first and the last; the Creator of the earth and the heavens.* And this Person says, *And now the Lord* JEHOVAH *and his Spirit hath sent me:* or, more probably, *The Lord* JEHOVAH *hath sent me and his Spirit. Origen,* as quoted by *Bishop Lowth,* comments on this passage in this manner: "Who is it that saith, in *Isaiah,* "And now the Lord hath sent me and his Spirit?" in which, as the expression is ambiguous, is it the Father and the Holy Spirit, who have sent Jesus? or the Father, who hath sent both Christ and the Holy Spirit? The latter is the true interpretation." This opinion of *Origen* appears to be just; because we no where read in the Scriptures, that Christ was sent by the Spirit; but, every where, that both Christ, and the Spirit, were sent by the Father, called in the text the LORD GOD. To the present purpose, however, this difference of interpretation is wholly immaterial. Whether the Spirit send or be sent, he is equally determined to be a living agent; since in the physical sense it is impossible, that any other being should either send, or be sent. In the text, then, the doctrine of a TRINITY is directly declared by a Person, styled JEHOVAH OF HOSTS. Let us now see what countenance this doctrine receives from the sources which I have specified above.

It will not be imagined, that in the compass of such a discourse, any thing more can be done than merely to make a moderate selection of the testimonies referred to. For those, which I shall mention, I am chiefly indebted to *Bishop Bull, Doctor Jamieson, Mr. Maurice, and the Asiatic Researches:* and it is believed, that

they will be sufficiently numerous, and sufficiently explicit, to satisfy a mind willing to receive the truth.

I. *To the Pre-existence of Christ the following testimonies must, I think, be regarded as complete.*

1st. *Justin Martyr*, who flourished in the year 140, and was born about the close of the first century, declares Christ to have been the person who appeared to *Abraham*, under the Oak of *Mamre;* and asserts that the person, here called LORD or JEHOVAH, to whom *Abraham* prays for *Sodom*, and who, in the next chapter, is said to rain fire and brimstone on the *Cities of the plain*, was no other than Christ. He also asserts, that Christ appeared to Moses in the bush.

2dly. *Irenæus*, who flourished in the year 178, declares, that Christ, as God, was adored by the Prophets; was *the God of the living; and the living God;* that he spoke to Moses in the bush; and that afterwards, the same Person refuted the doctrine of the *Sadducees* concerning the Resurrection of the dead. He further says, that *Abraham* learned divine truth from the *Logos*, or *Word of God.*

3dly. *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, who flourished in the year 181, declares, that Christ, assuming το προσωπον του πατρος, the character of the Father, that is, the Divine character, came to Paradise in the appearance of God, and conversed with *Adam.*

4thly. *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who flourished in the year 194, exhibits Christ as the Author of the former precepts, and of the latter; that is, of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and of the New; deriving both from one fountain.

5thly. *Tertullian* declares, that it was the Son of God who spoke to Moses, and who appeared, that is, as God, at all times; that he overthrew the Tower of *Babel;* confounded the languages of men; and rained fire and brimstone on *Sodom* and *Gomorrah.* He calls him *Dominus a Domino;* and says, that he only, and alway, conversed with men, from *Adam* down to the Patriarchs and Prophets, in visions and dreams; and that no other God conversed with men, beside *the Word, who was* afterward *to be made flesh.*

II. *That Christ was the Creator of the world, in the view of the ancient Church, the following testimonies satisfactorily prove.*

1st. *Barnabas*, who, as you well know, was a companion of the Apostles, and could not but know their views of this subject, says, in an epistle of his, yet remaining, "The Sun in the heavens was the work of the Son of God."

2dly. *Hermas*, also a companion of the Apostles, says, that "the Son of God was more ancient than any creature; seeing he was present with the Father at the Creation of the World."

3dly. *Athenagoras*, who flourished in the year 178, says, that "by Christ, and through Christ, all things were created; since the Father and the Son are "εν; one thing; one substance."

4thly. *Justin Martyr* declares, that "more than one Divine person are denoted by the phrase, *The man is become as one of us;* and that one of these is Christ."

5thly. *Clemens Alexandrinus* says, "The *Logos* is the universal Architect;" that is, the Maker of all things. He further says, "The *Logos* is the Creator of men and of the world." He also speaks of the *Logos* as the universal Ruler, and Instructer.

III. *That Christ was truly God, in the view of the ancient Church, will fully appear from the following testimonies.*

1st. *Clement* of *Rome*, who was a companion of the Apostles, calls Christ "the sceptre of the greatness of God," and says, "he had it in his power to have come with pomp and magnificence, but would not."

2dly. *Polycarp*, a disciple of *St. John*, when at the stake, addressed a prayer to God, which he concluded in this manner: "For all things I praise thee; I bless thee; I glorify thee; together with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ; with whom, unto thee, and the Holy Spirit, be glory, both now and for ever, world without end. Amen."

3dly. *Justin Martyr* declares, that "Christ, the *first born Word of God*, existed as God; that he is Lord and God, as being the Son of God; and that he was the *God of Israel*."

He also says, "We adore, and love, the *Word* of the unbegotten and invisible God." And again, "Him (the Father of righteousness) and *that* Son who hath proceeded from him, and the Prophetical Spirit, (that is, the Spirit of Inspiration) we worship and adore."

This doctrine, also, *Trypho*, his Jewish antagonist, admits as the doctrine of the Gentile Christians, generally.

4thly. The Church of *Smyrna*, in their Epistle to the other Churches concerning the Martyrdom of *Polycarp*, in which the abovementioned doxology is quoted, says, "We can never forsake Christ, nor worship any other: for we worship Him as being the Son of God."

5thly. *Athenagoras* says, "The Νες και Λογος, *Mind and Word of God*, is the Son of God;" and, "We who preach God, preach God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are One."

6thly. *Tatian, Bishop of Antioch*, who flourished in the year 172, says, "We declare, that God was born in human form."

7thly. *Melito, Bishop of Sardis*, who flourished in the year 177, says, "We are worshippers of one God, who is before all, and in all, in his Christ, who is truly God the Eternal Word."

8thly. *Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch*, says, "The three days before the creation of the heavenly luminaries, represent the Trinity; God, and his Word, and his Wisdom."

9thly. *Clemens Alexandrinus* prays to Christ to be propitious, and says, "Son and Father, both One Lord, grant, that we may

praise the Son, and the Father, with the Holy Ghost, all in One; *in* whom are all things, *through* whom are all things in One, through whom is Eternity, of whom we are all members, to him, who is in all things good, in all things beautiful, universally wise and just, to whom be glory, both now and for ever. Amen." He also says, "Gather together thy children, to praise in a holy manner, to celebrate without guile, Christ, Eternal *Logos*, infinite age, Eternal light, fountain of mercy."

10thly. *Tertullian* says, "The name of Christ is every where believed, and every where worshipped, by all the nations mentioned above. He reigns every where, and is every where adored. He is alike to all a King and to all a Judge, and to all a God and a Lord."

Again; "Behold all nations henceforth emerging from the gulph of error, to the Lord God the Creator, and to God his Christ."

*Tertullian* also declares, that "*Tiberius* received accounts from *Palestine*, of the things, which manifested the truth of Christ's Divinity."

To these Christian testimonies, all of the two first centuries, I shall subjoin a few others, out of multitudes, which belong to a later period.

The testimony of *Origen*, in his comment on the text, has been already seen. He, also, says, "We (Christians) worship One God, the Father, and the Son."

He further says, "Now, that you may know the Omnipotence of the Father and the Son to be one and the same, as He is one and the same God and Lord with the Father; hear what *St. John* hath said in the Revelation. These things saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. For who is the Almighty that is to come, but Christ?"

He, also, mentions the Christians, as saying, "that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are One God; and speaks of this as a difficult, and perplexing doctrine, to such as hear not with faith, or are not Christians."

Again; he says, "When we come to the grace of Baptism, we acknowledge One God only, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

*Origen* flourished in the year 230.

*Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage*, who flourished in the year 248, says, "Christ is our God; that is, not of all, but of the faithful, and believing."

*The Council of Antioch*, which sat about the year 264, in their Epistle, say, "In the whole Church, he is believed to be *God*, who emptied himself, indeed, of a state of equality with God; and *man*, of the seed of David, acording to the flesh."

*Eusebius*, the celebrated Ecclesiastical historian, who flourished in the year 315, declares, that *Pilate*, in his letter to *Tiberias* con-

cerning the miracles of Christ, says, that "he was raised from the dead; and that he was already believed by the body of the People to be God."

This part of the subject I shall conclude with the following heathen testimonies.

*Pliny* the Younger, in his letter to the Emperor *Trajan* from the province of *Bithynia*, whither he went with Proconsular authority, writes, that "certain Christians, whom he had examined, affirmed, that they were wont to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, and sing among themselves, alternately, a hymn to Christ, as to some God." This letter is, with the highest probability, placed in the year 107.

*Celsus*, an eminent *Epicurean* Philosopher, and Adversary of the Christians, charges them with worshipping Christ, "who," he says, "has appeared of late;" and whom he calls, "The Minister of God." *Celsus* flourished in the year 176.

At the same time flourished *Lucian*, the celebrated Writer of Dialogues, and a Philosopher of the same sect. In the *Philopatris*, a dialogue frequently attributed to him, *Triphon* represents the Christians as "swearing by the Most high God; the Great, Immortal, Celestial Son of the Father; the Spirit, proceeding from the Father; One of three, and three of One."

*Hierocles*, who flourished about the year 303, a Heathen Philosopher also, says, that "the Christians, on account of a few miracles, proclaim Christ to be God."

On these testimonies I shall only ask a single question. Can any person, who has them before him, doubt, for a moment, that the Christian Church, in its earliest ages, acknowledged, and worshipped, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as the only living and true God?

To the testimony of the *Christian* Church I shall now add that of the *Jewish* Church.

*Philo*, the celebrated Jew of *Alexandria*, who lived before the birth of our Saviour, calls the *Logos* the Eternal *Logos*, or Word; and says, that "he is necessarily eternal, and the image of the invisible God."

Further he says, "He, who *is*, is on each side attended by his nearest Powers; of which one is *Creative*, and the other *Kingly*. The Creative is God, by which he founded and adorned the Universe. The Kingly is Lord. He who is in the middle, being thus attended by both his Powers, exhibits to the discerning mind, the appearance, sometimes of One, and sometimes of Three."

Of the *Logos* he says, "He, who is the begotten, imitating the ways of his Father, and observing his archetypal patterns, produces forms;" that is, material things. He often calls the *Logos*, the *Divine Logos;* and represents him as the Manager, or Ruler of the world. He further says, that "God governs all things according to the strictest justice, having set over them his righteous *Lo-*

*gos*, his first begotten Son." The duration of created things he ascribes to this cause; that they were framed by Him, who remains; and who is never in any respect changed; the *Divine Logos*." Finally; he calls the *Logos* an Angel; the Name of God; a Man; the Beginning; the Eternal Image; the most ancient Angel; the Archangel, of many names; and the High Priest of this world; and says, "His head is anointed with oil."

*The Chaldee Paraphrasts, and other Jewish commentators, speak of this subject in a similar manner.*

They speak of the *Mimra*, the Hebrew term, rendered in the Greek Λογος, and in the English *Word*, as "the Word from before the Lord," or which is before the Lord; as a Redeemer; as only begotten; as the Creator. They say, "the Word of the Lord said, "Behold Adam, whom I have created, is the only begotten in the world; as I am the only begotten in the highest heavens." They paraphrased the text, Genesis iii. 8, *And they heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden, thus: "They heard the Word of the Lord God,"* &c.

Several Jewish commentators say, that "it was the Voice which was walking."

One of them says, that "Our first parents, before their sin, saw the Glory of God speaking to them; but after their sin, they only heard the Voice walking."

*Philo* and *Jonathan* both say, that "it was the Word of God, which appeared unto *Hagar*."

*Jonathan* says, "God will receive the prayer of *Israel* by his Word." Paraphrasing Jer. xxix. 14, he says, "I will be sought by you in my Word."

The *Jerusalem Targum*, or Paraphrase, says, "*Abraham* prayed in the name of the Word of the Lord, the God of the world."

*Jonathan* says also, "God will atone by his Word for his land, and for his people; even a people saved by the Word of the Lord."

Psalm cx. 1. They paraphrase, "The Lord said unto his Word," instead of *My Lord*, as in the original.

The Jewish commentators say, "there are *three Degrees* in the Mystery of Aleim, or Elohim; and these *degrees* they call *Persons*. They say, "They are all one, and cannot be separated."

Deut. vi. 4. *Hear, O Israel!* JEHOVAH, *our Aleim, is one* JEHOVAH, is thus rendered by the Author of the Jewish Book *Zohar;* "The Lord, and our God, and the Lord, are One." In his comment on this passage the Author says, "the LORD, or JEHOVAH, is the beginning of all things, and the perfection of all things; and he is called the Father. The other, or our God, is the depth or the fountain of sciences; and is called the Son. The other, or Lord, he is the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from them both, &c. Therefore he says, *Hear, O Israel!* that is, join together this Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and make him One Essence;

One Substance; for whatever is in the One is in the other. He hath been the whole; he is the whole; and he will be the whole."

Again; "What is the name of King Messiah? *Rabbi Akiba* hath said, JEHOVAH is his name. As it is declared, Jer. xxiii. 6, *And this is his name, by which they shall call him, Jehovah, our Righteousness.*

These Commentators, also, call him the Branch; the Comforter; Gracious; Luminous; &c.

And again; "The Holy God calls the King Messiah by his name: JEHOVAH is his name: for it is said, Exodus vii. 1, *The Lord is a man of war; Jehovah is his name.*"

To these explicit, and unquestionable testimonies I shall now add a collection of others, of a different nature, but scarcely less decisive.

In the concise history of the Creation *Moses* says, more than thirty times, *Aleim*, that is, *Gods*, created: the noun being plural, and the verb singular, in every instance. These the Jewish Paraphrasts explain by JEHOVAH; *his* WORD, that is, his Son; and *his* WISDOM, or Holy Spirit; which they call *three Degrees*. These *three*, they assert, are *One;* and declare them to be One, inseparable JEHOVAH. This doctrine the Jews have exhibited in a variety of methods; clear, convincing, and impressive. These I shall now proceed to exhibit, after having premised a remarkable sentence from *Rabbi Judah Hakkadosh*, or *Judah* the Holy, in which the doctrine of the Jewish Church is declared in the most explicit manner. "God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, Three in Unity, One in Trinity." This Rabbi flourished in the second century.

With this preface I observe,

1st. *That the Form of blessing, used by the Jewish Priests, and the mode of administering it, when they blessed the congregation, strongly exhibited the doctrine of the Trinity.*

This form of blessing is prescribed in Numbers vi. 24—26, JEHOVAH *bless thee, and keep thee.* JEHOVAH *make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee.* JEHOVAH *lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

This blessing, according to Rabbi *Menachen*, was pronounced in a different accent, during the utterance of each part; and, according to an account given by two other Rabbis, with the hand lifted up, and the three first fingers of the hand extended; the little finger being at the same time closed. This, they say, was done to express a Triad, or Trinity, in the Godhead.

2dly. The Jews anciently used a solemn symbol of the Deity, which they called *Sephiroth;* a word commonly signifying *Enumerations*, but used by their learned men to denote *Splendours.* These are sometimes exhibited in the form of a tree, with its branches extended; and sometimes by ten concentric circles: that figure being the symbol of perfection. All these splendours

are represented as issuing from the supreme and infinite Source, as light from the Sun.

Of this tree *Rabbi Schabte* says, "There are three degrees; the root, the stem, and the branches; and these three are one." By this he intends, that the infinite Source, and the other two Degrees, are one, and inseparable.

In the symbol of the circles, the three superior circles are called the *Crown*, Wisdom, and Understanding. "These," *Rabbi Isaac*, a famous and learned Jew, says, "are the highest Numerations, which possess one throne, on which sits the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." Two other celebrated Jewish Doctors say, "These are the Voice, the Spirit, and the Word; and these are One." And Rambam, the most celebrated of them all, says, "The *Crown* is *the primordial Spirit* of the living Aleim; and *his Wisdom* is *a Spirit from the Spirit;* and *the Understanding*, *Waters from the Spirit;* and between these, though thus distinguished, there is no distinction in essence; because the end is annexed to the beginning, and the beginning to the end, and the middle is comprehended by them."

The remaining Sephiroth denoted the attributes of God.

The ancient Jews applied the three first letters of the incommunicable name, JEHOVAH, to denote the three superior Splendours, viz. *Jod*, *He*, *Vau;* and the second *He*, or the last letter, denoted, according to them, the two natures of the second Splendour, or person.

3dly. *The ancient Jews wrote the name of God symbolically, by including three Jods within a circle, and subscribing under the Jods, and within the circle, the vowel Kametz.*

The circle was the figure denoting perfection. The three Jods were the beginning letter of the word JEHOVAH, thrice repeated, to denote the three persons in the Godhead. The Kametz was the point of perfection, and denoted the same thing with the circle, and the Unity, of the Divine Essence.

4thly. Another method, used by the Jews to denote God, was to include in a square three radii, or points, disposed in the form of a crown. The crown seems to have denoted the dignity and supremacy of the object designed, and the number *three*, the three Persons of the Godhead.

5thly. The letter *Schin* was another *emblem of the Most High, in use among the Jews.*

This letter, which is the first in the word Shaddai, the Almighty; one of the Scriptural names of God; is formed of three branches, alike in size and figure, especially as written in the ancient or *Samaritan* character, and united in one stem. This letter was distinctly written on those phylacteries, which the Jews wore upon their heads.

6thly. *The Equilateral triangle, with three small circles at the angles, and the letter Jod inscribed over against the upper angle, was*

*another Jewish symbol of the Deity.* The three sides indicated the three persons of the Godhead; and the equal length of the sides their equality; while the *Jod* was a direct proof that Jehovah was intended by the emblem. The three circles probably denoted the perfection of the three Persons.

7thly. The Jews also delineated the sphere, or representation of the Universe, as holden by three hands; two at the sides, and one at the bottom. Near the hands were inscribed the three Hebrew letters, *Aleph*, *Daleth*, and *Schin;* the initials of the three Hebrew words for truth, judgment, and peace. The same letters were also inscribed immediately above the sphere.

Such is the testimony of the Jewish Church concerning this subject, composed on the one hand of direct declarations, and on the other of symbols equally definite and certain; especially as explained by their own commentators. These prove, beyond a reasonable debate, that the ancient Jewish Church held, uniformly, the doctrine of the Trinity. The later Jews have, indeed, denied it; but to this denial they have been led, merely by their hatred to Christianity.

I shall now proceed to mention the opinion of the *Heathen nations* concerning this subject.

1st. *The Hindoos have, from the most remote antiquity, holden a Triad in the Divine nature.*

The name of the Godhead among these people is *Brahme.* The names of the three persons in the Godhead are *Brahma*, *Veeshnu*, and *Seeva.* Brahma they considered as the Father, or supreme Source; Veeshnu as the Mediator, whom they assert to have been incarnate; and Seeva as the Destroyer, and Regenerator: destruction being in their view nothing but the dissolution of preceding forms, for the purpose of reviving the same being in new ones.

The three faces of *Brahma*, *Veeshnu*, and *Seeva*, they always formed on one body, having six hands; or two to each person. This method of delineating the Godhead is ancient beyond tradition, universal, uncontroverted, and carved every where in their places of worship; particularly in the celebrated cavern in the Island of *Elephanta.*

2dly. *Equally well known is the Persian Triad; the names of which were* Ormusd, Mithr, and Ahriman; *called by the Greeks* Oromasdes, Mithras, *and* Arimanius. Mithras was commonly styled Τριπλασιος. Among *them*, as well as among the Hindoos, the second person in the Triad was called the *Mediator*, and regarded as the great Agent in the present world.

In the Oracles ascribed to *Zerdusht*, or *Zoroaster*, the famous Persian Philosopher, are the following declarations.

"Where the Eternal Monad is, it amplifies itself, and generates a Duality."

"A Triad of Deity shines forth throughout the whole world, of which a Monad is the head."

"For the mind of the Father said, that all things should be divided into Three; whose will assented, and all things were divided."

"And there appeared in this Triad, *Virtue*, *Wisdom*, and *Truth*, who knew all things."

"The Father performed all things, and delivered them over to the Second mind, whom the nations of men commonly suppose to be the First."

The third Person, speaking of himself, says, "I Psyche, or Soul, dwell next to the Paternal mind, animating all things."

3dly. *The Egyptians, also, acknowledged a Triad, from the earliest antiquity, whom they named originally* OSIRIS, CNEPH, and PHTHA; *and afterwards Osiris, Isis, and Typhon.* These Persons they denoted by the symbols *Light*, *Fire*, and *Spirit*. They represented them, also, on the doors, and other parts of their sacred buildings, in the three figures of a *Globe*, a *Wing*, and a *Serpent*. *Abenephius*, an *Arabian* Writer, says, that "by these the *Egyptians* shadowed Θεον τριμορφον; or God in three forms.

One of the *Egyptian* fundamental axioms of Theology, as given by *Damascius*, and cited by *Cudworth*, is, "There is one Principle of all things, praised under the name of the Unknown Darkness, and this thrice repeated."

In the Books, attributed to *Hermes Trismegistus* is the following passage.

"There hath ever been one great, intelligent Light, which has always illumined the Mind; and their union is nothing else but the Spirit, which is the Bond of all things."

Here light and mind are spoken of as two Persons, and the Spirit as the third; all declared to be eternal.

*Jamblichus*, a *Platonic Philosopher*, styled by *Proclus* the *Divine*, declares, that "Hermes speaks of *Eicton* as the first of intelligences, and the first intelligible; and of *Cneph*, or *Emeph*, as the Prince of the Celestial Gods; and of the *Demiurgic*, or creating, *Mind*, as a third to these. *Jamblichus* calls these the Demiurgic Mind, the Guardian of Truth, and Wisdom.

4thly. *The Orphic Theology, the most ancient recorded in Grecian history, taught the same doctrine.*

In the abridgment of this Theology by *Timotheus*, the Chronographer, are found its most important and characteristical doctrines. Of these the fundamental one is, that an Eternal, Incomprehensible Being exists, who is the Creator of all things. This supreme and eternal Being is styled in this Theology, Φως, Βελη, Ζωη; *Light, Counsel, Life.*

*Suidas*, speaking of these three, says, "they express only one and the same power." *Timotheus* says further, that *Orpheus* declared "All things to have been made by One Godhead in three names; or rather by these names of One Godhead; and that this Godhead is all things."

*Proclus*, a *Platonic Philosopher*, already mentioned, says, that *Orpheus* taught "the existence of One God, who is the ruler over all things; and that this One God is three Minds, three Kings; He who is; He who has, or possesses; and He who beholds. These three Minds he declares to be the same with the Triad of *Orpheus;* viz. *Phanes*, *Uranus*, and *Chronus*.

5thly. *The Greek Philosophers, also, extensively acknowledged a Triad.*

Particularly, *Pythagoras* styled God το 'εν, or the Unity; and μονας, or that which is alone; and also το αγαθον, or the good.

"From this Eternal Monad," says *Pythagoras*, "there sprang an infinite Duality; that is, from Him, who existed alone, two proceeded, who were infinite.

*Plato* also held a Triad; and named them το Αγαθον, the Good; Νους, or Λογος, Mind, or Word; and Ψυχη κοσμε, the Soul of the World. The το Αγαθον he also calls πρωτος Θεος, and μεγιστος Θεος.

*Parmenides*, the founder of the *Eleatic* Philosophy, says, The Deity is 'εν και πολλα; One and Many. *Simplicius*, commenting on Plato's exhibition of the doctrines of *Parmenides*, says, that "these words were a description of the αυτε Οντος," the true or original existence; and *Plotinus* says, that *Parmenides* acknowledged three Divine Unities subordinated. The first Unity he calls the most perfectly and properly One; the second, One many; and the third, One and many. *Plotinus* further says, that *Parmenides* acknowledged a Triad of original Persons. *Plotinus* speaks of God as being "the One, the Mind, and the Soul;" which he calls the original or principal persons. *Amelius* calls these Persons three Kings, and three Creators.

*Numenius*, a famous Pythagorean, acknowledged a Triad. The second Person he calls the Son of the first; and the third he speaks of, as proceeding also from the first.

6thly. *In the Empires of Thibet and Tangut, a triune God is constantly acknowledged in the popular religion.* Medals, having the image of such a God stamped on them, are given to the people by the *Delai Lama*, to be suspended, as holy, around their necks, or otherwise used in their worship. These people also worshipped an idol, which was the representation of a three-fold God.

7thly. A medal, now in the Cabinet of the Emperor of Russia, was found near the River *Kemptschyk*, a branch of the *Jenisea*, in *Siberia*, of the following description.

A human figure is formed on one side, having one body and three heads. This person sits upon the cup of the *Lotos;* the common accompaniment of the Godhead in various Eastern countries; and on a sofa, in the manner of Eastern Kings. On the other side is the following inscription. "The bright and sacred image of the Deity, conspicuous in three figures. Gather the holy purpose of God from *them:* love *him.*" A Heathen could not more justly, or strongly, describe a Trinity.

8thly. *The ancient Scandinavians acknowledged a Triad; whom they styled Odin, Frea*, and *Thor*. In the *Edda*, the most remarkable monument of *Scandinavian* Theology, *Gangler*, a Prince of *Sweden*, is exhibited as being introduced into the hall, or palace, of the Gods. Here he saw three thrones raised one above another, and on each throne a sacred person. These persons were thus described to him by his guide: "He, who sits on the lowest throne, is *Har*, or the Lofty One. The second is *Jafn Har*, or Equal to the Lofty One. He, who sits on the highest throne, is *Thridi*, or the Third.

9thly. *The Romans, Germans, and Gauls, acknowledged a Triad, and worshipped a Triad, in various manners.*

The *Romans* and *Germans*, worshipped the *Mairiæ;* three Goddesses inseparable, and always united in their worship, temples, and honours.

The Romans also, together with the *Greeks* and *Egyptians*, worshipped the *Cabiri*, or three Mighty Ones.

The *Diana* of the *Romans* is stamped on a Medal, as having three faces on three distinct heads, united to one form. On the reverse is the image of a man, holding his hand to his lips; under whom is this inscription: "Be silent; it is a mystery."

The German Goddess, *Trygla*, was drawn in the same manner.

The Gauls, also, united their Gods in triple groups, in a manner generally similar, as is evident from sculptures, either now, or lately, remaining.

10thly. *The Japanese and Chinese anciently acknowledged a Triad.*

The great image of *the Japanese* is One form, with three heads; generally resembling that of *Brahma*, *Veeshnu*, and *Seeva*, already described as worshipped by the *Hindoos*. The Chinese worshipped in ancient times One Supreme God, without Images, or symbols of any kind. This worship lasted until after the death of *Confucius*, about 500 years before the birth of Christ.

*Lao-Kiun*, the celebrated founder of one of the philosophical, or religious, sects in *China*, delivered this, as the great leading doctrine of his Philosophy: "That the Eternal Reason produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; and Three produced All things."

11thly. *The American Nations, also, have in several instances acknowledged a Triad.*

The *Iroquois* hold, that before the creation three Spirits existed; all of whom were employed in creating mankind.

The Peruvians adored a Triad, whom they styled the *Father* and *Lord Sun*, the *Son Sun*, and the *Brother Sun*.

In *Cuquisaco*, a province of *Peru*, the inhabitants worshipped an image, named *Tangatanga;* which in their language signifies *One in Three*, and *Three in one*.

Thus have I finished this numerous collection of testimonies to the great Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. The labour, employed in making it, has, I hope, not been useless. In a serious mind it cannot, I think, fail to produce, not conviction only, but astonishment, and delight, to see the wonderful manner, in which God has diffused, and perpetuated, the evidence of this doctrine throughout the successive periods of time. The testimonies of the Jewish and Christian Churches are complete and irresistible. We are not to expect, that, amid all the ignorance of Heathenism, correct and unobjectionable ideas of God should be found in any nation.

But when we consider, that the doctrine of a Triad has been so evidently received, without a question, in all the four quarters of the Globe, and by so many different nations; that it was received among almost all those who were ancient; that it was received independently of the Scriptures; that it was expressed in so many forms, and those completely decisive as to the real meaning; that the scheme in all these forms was, unanswerably, the union of Three Divine Beings, or Persons, in One; and that this scheme was so often, and so definitely, explained in multiplied and very various modes of expression; modes of expression too, which are incapable of being misconstrued; we cannot, I think, fail to determine, that the doctrine of the Trinity was originally revealed to the human race; and has almost every where been conveyed down, both in their worship, and their sacred traditions.

# SERMON LXXII.

REGENERATION.—THE AGENT.—HIS AGENCY.

TITUS iii. 5.—*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

IN a preceding discourse, I proposed to enter upon an inquiry into the great subject of *Regeneration* under two principal heads:

I. *The Agent in this work;* and,

II. *The Work itself.*

The former of these subjects I proposed to discuss under these heads:

I. *The Character of the Agent;* and,

II. *His Agency.*

The Character of the Agent I have already examined.

In investigating his Agency I propose to consider,

I. *The Fact;*

II. *Its Nature;*

III. *Its Necessity;* and,

IV. *The Objections to it.*

It will be observed, that I here take it for granted, that mankind are, in some instances, really regenerated; reserving the proof of this doctrine to a future occasion, when I shall come to the discussion of the second thing originally proposed; viz. *The Work of Regeneration.* In discoursing on collateral subjects of Theology, or of any other science, it is, not very unfrequently, necessary to suppose one or more of them, for the time, allowed; to preclude useless embarrassment in the discussion of the others. This, however, is to be done only for the time; and only for the purpose, which has been specified. It is no part of my design, in this system, to take any point in Theology for granted; nor to expect the belief of any doctrine, alleged by me, unless the arguments, adduced to support it, shall be found solid and convincing. Nor do I ever intend to consider any thing as granted by those, who differ from me, unless I suppose it to be really granted by them. If there be found in this system of discourses any thing, contrary to these principles, I hope it will be considered as the result of inattention, and error, on my own part; for no departure from them will receive any justification from me.

With these things premised, I shall now proceed to a consideration of

*The Fact, that the Holy Ghost is the Agent in the Regeneration of Man.*

It will be easily seen, that the proof of this position must be derived from the Scriptures; and that all the evidence concerning it, furnished by reason and experience, must be merely auxiliary; and cannot, in the nature of the case, be decisive. From the Scriptures, then, I shall proceed to allege such proofs of this doctrine, as to me appear satisfactory.

1st. *I argue this doctrine from Declarations of the Scriptures.*

The text is one of these declarations.

In this passage we are said to be *saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* The word *renewing* is an exact translation of the original word in this place. *To renew* signifies, as you well know, *to make new*, or *to make over again.* This operation is here ascribed to the Holy Ghost in as simple and unambiguous terms, as are possible.

John i. 12, 13, is another example of the same nature. *But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of Man, but of God.*

In this passage of Scripture it is asserted, that the birth, by which mankind become the sons of God, is derived not from blood, or natural descent; nor, from the will of the flesh; nor, from the will of man; that is, not from human contrivance and determination in any form; but from God. It is difficult to conceive how this doctrine could be more clearly asserted. But if those who sustain this character are born of God, they are born of the Spirit of God. For our Saviour, discoursing on this subject in the third chapter, says, *Except a Man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That, which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that, which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.* Here the Persons, said in the former passage to be born of God, are declared by our Saviour to be born of the Spirit; and that which is born of the Spirit is declared alone to be spiritual. So far as I can see, these passages in the most decisive manner assert Regeneration to be, exclusively, the work of the Spirit of God.

In this passage, also, *that which is born of the flesh is* declared to be *flesh;* that is, whatever proceeds from a fleshly source partakes of its fleshly nature. The word *flesh* is customarily used in the Scriptures to denote *the native character of man.* In this sense *the carnal*, or fleshly, *mind* is declared by *St. Paul* to be *enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed capable of being subject to it.* In the same sense, the same Apostle says, *In me*, that is, *in my flesh*, or natural character, *dwelleth no good thing.*

A contrast is studiously run between that, which proceeds from the *Spirit*, and that which proceeds from the *flesh;* or, to use the words of our Saviour in the passage above quoted, between *that which is flesh, and that which is spirit;* in several passages of Scripture. *To be carnally minded*, says *St. Paul, is death; but to*

*be spiritually minded is life and peace.* Rom. viii. 6. In the original, *the minding of the flesh is death; but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace.* And again; Gal. v. 19—23. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they, which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* In these passages, the different natures of the fleshly and spiritual character are too strongly marked to need a comment. All that is sinful, odious to God, and the object of his wrath, plainly belongs to the former; and all that is holy, lovely in the sight of God, and the object of his favour, belongs to the latter. But *that, which is born of the flesh is flesh;* is of this odious guilty nature; *while that which is born of the Spirit is alone Spirit.* In other words, whatever is good and acceptable before God in the character of man is produced by the Holy Ghost.

In 2 Thess. ii. 13, *St. Paul* says, *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through the sanctification of the Holy Ghost.* The Thessalonian Church, then, was chosen to salvation: How? Through the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. The sanctification of these persons, then, was a part of the original purpose of God, and a pre-requisite to their salvation. The *Thessalonians*, therefore, were renewed, or regenerated, by the Holy Ghost; and, by necessary conclusion, all others, who become the subjects of regeneration.

1 Cor. vi. 11. *But ye are sanctified by the Spirit of God.*

In the two preceding verses, *St. Paul* mentions several classes of men, who, he declares, *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Then he subjoins, *Such were some of you. But*, he adds, *Ye are sanctified by the Spirit of God.* Formerly these Corinthians were of the number of those, who, continuing in their proper character, could *not inherit the kingdom of God.* That, which now made them of a new and opposite character, was, that they were *sanctified by the Spirit of God.*

In *Ezekiel* xxxvi. 26, 27, God says, *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.* Here giving these *Israelites* a new heart, and a new spirit, is plainly, and exactly, equivalent to the import of this declaration, *I will put my spirit within you;* as the consequence of which, it is declared, that they *shall walk in the statutes of God, and keep his judgments.* The disposition therefore, with which mankind keep the statutes, or

obey the law of God, is produced in them by God himself, and is effectuated by his Spirit.

In the following chapter God says, verses 13, 14, to the house of *Israel*, represented as spiritually dead, *Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live.* Here Spiritual life is exhibited as the immediate effect of the agency of the Spirit of God.

To these passages of Scripture I shall subjoin a few more, out of a great multitude to the same purpose. *For the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost.* Rom. v. 5.

*Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

*No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor. xii. 3.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.* Rom. viii. 14.

*I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. Isai.* xliv. 3. The direct consequence of this effusion of the Spirit is declared in verse 5th. *One shall say, I am the* LORD's, *and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob.*

2dly. *The same doctrine is taught us by facts, contained in the Scriptures.*

Our Saviour preached to the Jewish nation at least three years and a half; if not more than four years. It will be admitted, that he was the best of all preachers; and that his preaching was more perfectly calculated, than any other, to produce holiness in the hearts of those who heard him. Yet it will also be admitted, that he was not a very successful preacher. We naturally ask, Why was he not successful? The Apostles, on the contrary, though certainly and greatly inferior to Christ in wisdom and persuasiveness, preached, still, with wonderful success. *St. Peter* by the first sermon, which he delivered to the Jews, probably converted more to the faith and obedience of the Gospel, than Christ, during the whole of his ministry. We naturally ask, also, Whence arose this wonderfully different efficacy in the preaching of *St. Peter* and that of his Master. The persons, whom they both addressed, were the same. They had been witnesses of the miracles of both. Why then were they perfectly dead to the preaching of Christ; and *pricked to the heart*, and turned to God, by that of *St. Peter?* The cause was not in the preaching. It was not in the hearers: for they were the very same persons. It was, then, an extraneous cause. The event was not derived *from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but from God.*

*St. Paul* preached at *Philippi many days.* It seems clear, that the Jailer must frequently have heard him. Yet his words made no impression upon the Jailer's heart, until that night in which he was converted. Yet then in a moment, upon *Paul's* calling to him *to do himself no harm;* he hastened into the prison, and cried out to *Paul* and *Silas, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* A cause, ad-

equate to this change in the Jailer, must be admitted here: and this can have been no other, than that *the Lord opened his heart*, as he had before done that of *Lydia*, in the same place.

Generally, to what other cause can be assigned the universal success of the Apostles in preaching the Gospel? *St. Peter* has taught us to attribute this wonderful event to the peculiar and remarkable effusion of the Holy Ghost *in the last days*, or days of the Gospel, predicted by the Prophet *Joel*, and begun to be accomplished on the day of Pentecost. If this be not admitted as the true cause, it will, I apprehend, be very difficult to assign another, which will be found adequate to the effect, or which will in any measure satisfy a sober inquirer.

II. *The Nature of this Agency next demands our consideration.*

Concerning this I observe,

1st. *That it is the result of the mere good pleasure of God.* Whatever other reasons may exist for the communication of this essential blessing, (and that the best reasons do exist can never be seriously questioned) it is plainly impossible, that it should be merited by any child of *Adam*. The very supposition, that we are regenerated, involves the necessity of our regeneration. But this necessity is the result of our sinfulness only; and this character plainly precludes, wherever it is found, the possibility of meriting to be regenerated. The agency of the Divine Spirit in this work is therefore, on the one hand, sovereign, and on the other, gracious; or, in other words, flows from the sovereign and unmerited mercy of our Divine Benefactor.

2dly. *It is unresisted.*

It has often been called *irresistible*. This language has given rise to very extensive, and, as I apprehend, to very unwarrantable, controversies in the Christian Church. Others, and among them men of great respectability, have more sanguine expectations concerning the issue of debates about metaphysical subjects, than I am able to form; and, perhaps, I should be unwarranted in saying that they are not more just. But, so far as my acquaintance with the views, and reasonings, of men extends, I entertain very faint hopes of seeing any solid good spring from speculations concerning *the nature of causes, and the modes of their operation*. The facts, that such and such causes exist; and that they operate to the production of such and such effects, we, in many instances, well understand. But the nature of the cause itself, and the nature and manner of its efficiency, are, in most instances, too subtile, or too entirely hidden from our view, either to be perceived at all, or to be so perceived, as to become the materials of real and useful knowledge. Hence, probably, has been derived the fact, that speculations on such subjects, though often satisfactory to the Philosopher himself, and to his own immediate friends and followers, have rarely satisfied others, or produced any lasting effects on mankind. The schoolmen were, perhaps, as able investigators of such

subjects, as the world has ever seen; and their speculations were, at times, proofs of sagacity, and discrimination, not inferior to what has been displayed in the most boasted efforts of succeeding ages. Yet how little are they studied, or remembered, at the present time! Scarcely are they mentioned, unless with pity or contempt; or as sources of astonishment, awakened by the sight of talents misapplied.

The success of these men should, one would think, furnish a lesson to such as follow after them. They too, had their day of reputation and splendour: of splendour, far superior to any thing, which modern writers can boast, or modern times will ever be disposed to give. But *it was a vapour, which appeared for a little time, and then vanished away. The morning clouds* of the present day will appear for a period still less; and the system, which for the moment attracts many eyes, will in another moment be forgotten. Neither the fame, acquired by the author, nor the stability, attributed to his system by his followers, should, therefore, induce us to rely on the desert of the one, or the permanency of the other.

When it is said, that the Agency of the Divine Spirit in renewing the heart of man is *irresistible*, it is probably said, because this agency being an exertion of Omnipotence, is concluded, of course, to be irresistible by human power. This seems not, however, to be said on solid grounds. *That* agency of the Holy Ghost, which, *St. Stephen* informs us, was resisted by the *Jews*, and by their fathers, was an exertion of the same Omnipotence; and was yet resisted by human power. I know of nothing in the regenerating agency of the same Spirit, except the fact, that it is never resisted, which proves it to be irresistible, any more than that, which the *Jews* actually resisted. That the Spirit of God can do any thing with man, and constitute man any thing, which He pleases, cannot be questioned. But that he will exert a regenerating agency on the human mind, which man has not a natural power to resist, or which man could not resist, if he would, is far from being satisfactorily evident to me. Indeed, I am ready to question whether this very language does not lead the mind to views concerning this subject, which are radically erroneous.

In the 110th Psalm, in which we have an account of Christ's being constituted *a Priest for ever after the order of* MELCHISEDEK, we have, in the 3d verse, this remarkable promise made to Christ: *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* This promise respects the very subject, now under consideration; and is, I suspect, a more accurate account of it, than can be found in the language, which I am opposing. In the day of Christ's power his people *are* willing. The influence, which he exerts on them by his Spirit, is of such a nature, that their wills, instead of attempting any resistance to it, coincide with it readily and cheerfully; without any force or constraint on his part, or any opposition on their own.

*That it is an unresisted Agency, in all cases*, is unquestionable; *that it is irresistible, in any*, does not appear.

III. *The Necessity of this Agency, will, if I mistake not, be evident from the following considerations:*

1st. *It is declared in the Scriptures.*

*No man*, saith our Saviour, *can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him.* This declaration will, I suppose, be allowed by the warmest opposers of this doctrine to have a meaning. There are but two meanings, which it can possibly have. One is, *that it is physically impossible for any man to come to Christ, unless drawn by the Father:* the other is, that *it is morally impossible.* The former of these will be denied by both parties; the latter must, therefore, be conceded. In other words, it must be acknowledged, that mankind are so opposed to Christ in their inclinations, that they will never come to him, that is, believe on him, unless drawn by the Father; or, which is the same thing, renewed by his Spirit. It will be remembered, that God is no where in the Scriptures exhibited as drawing mankind to Christ in any other manner, than by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

*Except a man be born of the Spirit*, says our Saviour, *he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Here it is obvious, that to be *born of the Spirit* is declared to be an event, without which it is impossible for men *to see the kingdom of God.* The necessity of the agency of the Spirit cannot be more strongly exhibited, than in the declaration, that without it, it is impossible to see the kingdom of God.

*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* If the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; if he cannot know them; if they are foolishness to him; so long as he continues in his natural state: if they are spiritually discerned, and therefore incapable of being discerned without a spiritual taste, and character; if, at the same time, the discernment and knowledge of spiritual things is indispensably necessary to our attainment of salvation; then the agency of the Spirit of God in our Regeneration is absolutely necessary to us, in the same sense, and degree, in which our salvation is necessary. Our Saviour declares to *Nicodemus*, that *that only which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, or spiritual; while *that which is born of the flesh;* viz. all that is in man, and all that belongs to his natural character; *is flesh;* that is, of this very natural character, *which receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.*

2dly. *Reason teaches the same doctrine.*

The question has been often asked, "*Why, since a holy mind can become sinful, a sinful mind may not also become holy?* No preternatural agency," it is observed, "is necessary to accomplish the former change: why is any such agency necessary to accomplish the latter? The extent of the change in both instances is exactly the same; the one being merely the converse of the other. It

would seem, then, that the same physical powers, which are sufficient for the accomplishment of the former, must be sufficient, also, for the accomplishment of the latter. But by most men it is acknowledged, that the physical powers of the same being, when holy, are exactly the same, as when sinful; both the understanding and the will remaining, in the physical sense, unaltered. Where, then, lies the impossibility, or even the difficulty, of the supposition, that man can regenerate himself; or, which is the same thing, turn, of his own accord, from sin to holiness?"

All these questions are in my view fairly asked; and all the principles, suggested, true. Still the conclusion is unsound, and will not follow. This, however, I am bound to prove in a manner equally fair; and the more especially as a great multitude of serious, and, I hope, good men have found, and still find, no little difficulty in their contemplations on this subject.

That a holy being should be capable of sinning seems not, in the nature of the case, to be a supposition, attended with any great difficulty. All beings, holy and sinful alike, relish and desire natural good, or happiness. This can be found in an endless multitude of objects. Of these some may be enjoyed lawfully, or consistently with the will of God: while others cannot. These however, so far as they are supposed capable of communicating happiness, are, still, naturally the objects of desire to holy beings, as truly as to sinful ones. All natural good, when perceived, is, by itself considered, desired of course by every percipient being. Now it is plain, that this good may, in a given case, appear so great to a holy being; may so engross his whole attention; may so far exclude from his mind other considerations, and among them those of his duty; as to induce him to seek the good in view at the expense of his duty. In this manner, I apprehend, the Angels, who fell, violated their duty; and our first parents, theirs. Nor do I see how holy beings, so long as they love natural good, and are placed in a world, where it is variously and amply provided, can fail of being exposed to temptations from this source; nor, if these temptations be supposed to possess a given degree of power, or, which is the same thing, to contain a given degree of natural good, and to be set fully and exclusively before the mind, how such beings can fail, without peculiar divine assistance, of being exposed to fall.

In all this, however, there is nothing to countenance the supposition, that a sinner will in the same manner turn from sin to holiness. A sinner has no relish for spiritual good; that is, for the enjoyment furnished by virtuous affections and virtuous conduct. To apply the words of *Isaiah* concerning Christ, as regarded by the *Jews*, to this good, as regarded by sinners, *When they see it, there is no beauty in it, that they should desire it.* Is. liii. 2. Whenever this good, therefore, becomes an object of the sinner's contemplation, as his mind is wholly destitute of any relish for it, he will never desire it for its own sake; and will never make any such

efforts to gain it, as are absolutely necessary to accomplish the renovation of his heart. The relish for spiritual good is that state of mind, out of which all virtuous volitions spring. No volition is ever excited but by good; and by good, actually perceived, and relished. As spiritual good is never thus perceived by a sinner; it will not excite a single volition in his mind towards the attainment of it; but will operate upon him as little, as harmony upon the deaf, or beautiful colours upon the blind.

But, the relish for spiritual good is the characteristical distinction of holy beings; their *essential* characteristic; without which they would cease to be holy. The want of it, on the contrary, is a primary characteristic of sinful beings. In this lies the real difficulty of regenerating ourselves, and not in the want of sufficient natural powers: and, so long as this continues, an extraneous agency must be absolutely necessary for our regeneration.

IV. *The Objections to the agency of the Divine Spirit in this work shall now be briefly considered.*

1st. *It is objected, that this doctrine infers partiality in the conduct of God.*

That in the conduct of God, in this case, there are mysterious and difficult things, which I cannot explain, I readily acknowledge. What the particular reasons are, by which God is influenced in this dispensation, he has not been pleased to reveal; and we, therefore, are wholly unable to determine. It is sufficient for us, that we know all his conduct, in this and every other case, to be directed by the best reasons.

But this case presents no more difficulty, than a thousand others, in which we do not even think of starting this objection. We might as well complain of the common dispensations of God's providence, as of this. "Why," we might ask, "was one child born of Popish parents, and educated in all the ignorance and superstition of the Romish religion; and another born of Protestant parents, and educated under the light and blessings of the Reformed religion? Why is one man destined by his birth to be a savage; and another to be a member of civilized, enlightened, and religious society? Why is one man a native of *Sennaar;* and another of *New England:* One a beggar; another a prince: One deaf and dumb; another endowed with hearing, and speech? Why are there any beggars; any savages? Nay, why are there any men; and why are we not all Angels?"

To apply the question to the very case in hand: Why, on the supposition that we regenerate ourselves, is one man furnished with those endowments both of understanding and will, and with those advantages, all of which, united, terminate in his regeneration; and another, not?

It will be easily seen from these questions, that the objection of partiality lies with the same force against all inequalities of distribution in the Divine Government, as against this dispensation. In-

deed, the only way to remove this objection must be to make all beings exactly alike, and to confer on them exactly the same distributions. In other words, God, in order to remove this objection, must make all his conduct a mere repetition of exactly the same actions towards every creature.

2dly. *It is objected, also, that this doctrine supposes man not to be a free agent in his regeneration.*

To this objection I answer, that, if it be true, and be seen by us to be true, our knowledge of its truth must be derived either from some declaration of the Scriptures, or from the nature of the subject, philosophically investigated. From the former of these sources we cannot derive this knowledge; because no declaration of Scripture asserts any thing of this nature. All our knowledge with regard to it, therefore, must of course be derived from the latter. I ask, then, what knowledge does the nature of this subject furnish us of the truth of the objection? Is it derived from the fact, *that this agency has been called irresistible?* With the arguments derived from the use of this term, on either side, I have no concern. It is not used in the Scriptures, nor do I either discern, or admit, the propriety of using it. The task of defending the use of it, therefore, I shall leave to those who do.

Is it derived from the fact, *that this Agency is extraneous?* It will not be pretended, that all extraneous influence on the mind destroys its freedom. *We* act upon the minds of each other, and often with complete efficacy; yet it will not be said, that we destroy each other's freedom of acting. God, for aught that appears, may act, also, on our minds, and with an influence, which shall be decisive; and yet not destroy, or even lessen, our freedom.

Does the truth of the objection appear *in the particular kind of Agency here used.* Let me ask the Objector, what is this particular kind of Agency? The only account of the subject in the Scriptures is, that it is *renovating*, *regenerating*, or *sanctifying*. So far as my knowledge extends, neither the friends, nor the adversaries, of the doctrine have added any thing to this account which explains the subject any farther. But it can be said, even with plausibility, that God cannot sanctify an intelligent creature without infringing on his freedom. If it be said, it should also be proved; and this, so far as my knowledge extends, has not hitherto been done. Until it shall be done, the mere assertion of our opponents may be fairly answered by a contrary assertion.

When God created Man, he created him in his own image. This *St. Paul* informs us, consists *in knowledge*, *righteousness*, *and true holiness.* But if God, without destroying, or rather preventing, *his* freedom of agency, could *create* him in this image; it will be difficult to prove, or to conceive, that he cannot *restore* to his descendants the same image, after it has been lost, without destroying *their* freedom. The *thing given* is the same; and *the agency by which it is given* is the same. Its *influence on the freedom of the*

*creature* must therefore be exactly the same. Its whole influence, in both cases alike, is successive to the agency itself; and must, of course, affect the freedom of the creature in precisely the same manner.

Does *our experience* furnish any knowledge of this nature? Ask any Christian; and he will tell you, if competent to answer the question, that he is conscious of no loss, nor change, in his own freedom of acting; but on the contrary, he chose, and acted, in the same manner, as before, and with the same full possession of all his powers; and that the only difference between his former and present state is, that he now loves God, and obeys him voluntarily; whereas he formerly hated him and voluntarily disobeyed him.

The truth is, this objection is not derived from Revelation, nor from fact. It owes its existence only to the philosophical scheme of agency, which makes the freedom of moral beings consist in *self-determination, indifference, and contingency;* a scheme, in its own nature impossible, and self-contradictory; as any person may see completely evinced in an Inquiry concerning this subject by the first *President Edwards.*

Upon the whole, the plain declarations of the Scriptures are not to be set aside by the philosophy of men. Especially is this not to be done, where the subject of investigation lies, as in the present case, beyond our reach. What the precise nature of the Agency of the Holy Ghost, in regenerating mankind, is, in the metaphysical sense, man cannot know. It becomes all men, therefore, to be satisfied with the declarations of God, who does know; who cannot deceive us; and who has, of course, declared to us the truth.

# SERMON LXXIII.

## REGENERATION.—ITS NECESSITY AND REALITY.

JOHN iii. 3.—*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

HAVING considered *the character of the Holy Ghost*, and *his agency in the work of regeneration*, I shall now proceed, according to the plan originally proposed, to examine the *work itself*, under the three following heads:

I. *The Necessity;*

II. *The Reality;* and,

III. *The Nature; of Regeneration.*

I. *I shall consider the Necessity of the work of Regeneration.*

In the preceding discourse, I took the fact, that some men are regenerated, for granted; and on this ground, attempted to prove, that the agency of the Spirit of God was necessary for the accomplishment of our regeneration. The question concerning the necessity of regeneration itself, and the question concerning the necessity of that agency in producing it, are entirely distinct. Yet it will be readily perceived, that the arguments, adduced under the latter question in the preceding discourse, may with unabated force be, in several instances, applied to the former; *that*, which is now under consideration. Particularly is this true concerning several passages of Scripture, then adduced. For example, John iii. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 6, 7. Gal. v. 19—23. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Cor. vi. 11, connected with the context; are all, together with several others, of this nature. On these, to avoid wearying my audience with repetitions, I shall not at present insist.

At the same time, the certainty, that there is nothing in our moral character, which will lead us to regenerate ourselves, as exhibited in that discourse, is one, and an important one, among the reasons, which evince, in connexion with other argument, the necessity of our regeneration; and is, therefore, with propriety, recalled to your remembrance on the present occasion.

But the great proof of the necessity of regeneration is found in the depravity of our nature. The universality, and the degree of this corruption, have been shown, if I am not deceived, in a manner, too evident to be rationally called in question. In the discourses, which I formerly delivered on these subjects,* I produced a long train of passages of Scripture, in which the natural charac-

* See Sermons xxix. to xxxiv. inclusive.

ter of man is, in the most unequivocal terms, declared to be corrupt, sinful, and abominable in the sight of God. This truth I elucidated, also, by arguments drawn from reason, and experience, which, to my own view, were unanswerable. Among these, I specified the opposition made by mankind to the Gospel; the testimonies, which mankind have themselves given concerning the subject in their Laws; their Religion; their History; their Conversation; and their conduct, both in amusements, and in the serious business of life. From these, and several other things, I derived it as a consequence, flowing, in my own view irresistibly, from the premises, that *in our flesh* or native character *there dwelleth no good thing*.

This doctrine *St. Paul* teaches in the most explicit manner, in the three first chapters of the Epistle to the *Romans;* and commenting on his own words, says, *We have proved both* JEWS *and* GENTILES, *that they are all under sin.*

I shall consider this point as being *actually* proved; and on this basis shall found the following arguments, designed to show the Necessity of Regeneration.

1st. *It is unreasonable to suppose, that God can admit sinners to the blessings of heaven.*

God is perfectly holy, and therefore regards sin only with hatred and abhorrence. Every sinner opposes his whole character, law, designs, and government; loves what he hates; hates what he loves; and labours to dishonour his name, and to frustrate his purposes. The designs of God involve the supreme and eternal good of the Universe. In the accomplishment of this Divine purpose his glory is entirely manifested; because the best of all characters is thus displayed in the most perfect degree. But these designs, and the character discovered in accomplishing them, the sinner steadily hates, and opposes. Were it in his power, he would frustrate the accomplishment; and prevent the glory of God, and the supreme good of the creation.

This character of the sinner God discerns with clear and unerring certainty. Both his guilt, and its desert, are naked to the Omniscient eye. It is impossible, therefore, that he should not regard it with abhorrence. To suppose him, then, to approve, and love such a character, is to suppose him to approve of that, which he sees to be deserving of his absolute reprobation; and to love that which he knows merits nothing but his hatred. Should he in fact do this, he would invert his whole system of dispensations towards the Universe; and exhibit to his Intelligent creatures a character totally new, and directly opposite to that which he has displayed, hitherto, in his Law, and Government; especially in the work of Redemption. Of course, he would not only cease to be unchangeable, but would become a being of a totally opposite character to that perfect one, which he has hitherto challenged to himself. He

would renounce his Deity: and cease to sustain the excellence, involved in the incommunicable name, Jehovah.

Further; should God, without approving of a sinful character, confer upon the unregenerated sinner the blessings, which are the proper rewards of virtuous creatures; he would equally desert his character, and government; and overthrow the wisdom, equity, and end, of his designs. Every external favour, shown to guilty beings after their probation is ended, is a testimony on the part of God, that he approves of their conduct during the probationary state, and a reward for that conduct. It is a definitive testimony; a testimony, given when all their conduct is before him; a solemn, judicial testimony; a testimony of action, the surest interpreter of the thoughts. In the present case, it would be the highest and most solemn of all testimonies; because he would bestow on them the greatest of all rewards, the blessings of heaven.

If, then, he did not feel this approbation, he would, in the case supposed, declare the grossest possible falsehood to the Universe; viz. that impenitent sinners merited the highest rewards which it was in his power to bestow. He would declare, that such sinners deserved the same proofs of his favour, as his obedient children, and were, therefore, of the same character; that rebels were faithful subjects; that enemies were friends; and that, although he had heretofore denounced them as objects of his wrath, they were still the objects of his infinite complacency. This would be no other than a final declaration on his part, that right and wrong, holiness and sin, were the same things; that his Law, and the Government founded on it, were introduced to no purpose, unless to excite wonder and fear in his intelligent creatures; that the redemption of Christ was accomplished to no end; and that all the Divine conduct, solemn, awful, and sublime as it has appeared, was wholly destitute of any object, and really of no importance in the view of the infinite Mind.

2dly. *This change of heart is absolutely necessary for the sinner himself, in order to make him capable of the happiness of heaven.*

Heaven is the seat of supreme and unmingled happiness; of enjoyment solid, sincere, and eternal. The foundation, on which, so far as creatures are concerned, this happiness ultimately rests, is their holy or virtuous character. All their affections, all their pursuits, all their enjoyments, are virtuous without a mixture. Hence heaven is called *the high* and *holy place;* and, from the dispensations of God towards these unspotted beings, is termed *the habitation of his holiness.* With such companions a sinner could not accord; such affections he could not exercise; in such pursuits he could not unite; in such enjoyments he could not share. This is easily and familiarly demonstrated. Sinners do not love virtuous persons here; exercise no virtuous affections; engage in no virtuous pursuits; and relish no virtuous enjoyments. Sinners in the present world love not God; trust not in the Redeemer; delight not in

Christians; and regard neither the Law of God, nor the Gospel of his Son, with complacency of heart. Sinners in this world find no pleasure in the Sabbath, nor in the sanctuary; and never cordially unite either in the prayers, or the praises, then and there offered up to their Maker.

How, then, could sinners find happiness in heaven? That glorious world is one vast sanctuary; and the endless succession of ages, which roll over its happy inhabitants, are an everlasting sabbath. Their great and commanding employment is unceasing and eternal worship. *They rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who wast, who art, and who art to come.*

As the worship of God is uniformly burdensome to sinners, here; the same worship must be at least equally burdensome to them there. Nay, it must be far more burdensome. The more holy, the more spiritual, any thing is, in this world, the more loathsome, the more painful, is it to the mind of a sinner. But all the employments of heaven are super-eminently holy and spiritual. These, then, must be far more disgusting, than any thing, which Religion, or its worship, can present to his view in the present world. In heaven, therefore, he would be far less happy, than he is here. Every thing, with which he was conversant, would more oppose his taste, contravene his wishes, and disappoint his expectations. Nothing would give him pleasure: every thing would give him pain.

If, then, a sinner is to be admitted into heaven, it is absolutely necessary, that he should have a new heart, a new disposition. Otherwise, it is plain, that, amid all the blessings of that delightful world, he would find nothing but disgust, mortification, and sorrow.

3dly. *Such a change is necessary for the Sinner, also, in order to his becoming a useful inhabitant of heaven.*

All the inhabitants of that happy world are formed to *do* good, as well as to *enjoy* it. Their enjoyment itself is supremely the result of a disposition to do good, and of conduct, in which this disposition is completely carried into efficacious practice. *There*, is realized in the most absolute manner, the whole nature of that perfect rule of righteousness, delivered by our Saviour, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive;* to do good, than to gain it from others. Virtuous beings are assembled here for the very purpose of exhibiting in their conduct the divine nature, and transcendent effects, of this evangelical rule of righteousness; and from their united efforts flows, in streams continually enlarging, universal, unceasing, and immortal good.

The good, here enjoyed, is a common, or public, good; in which one great and general interest is proposed, and pursued; and to which all private, personal interests are cheerfully subordinated. No selfish affection operates here: no selfish purpose exists. Every mind is expanded with affections, all embracing the common interest. Every design is elevated to a happiness, rendered

noble and supreme, because it is universal. To this object every pulse beats: every heart thrills; every tongue vibrates. On it, as if magnetically influenced, every eye is fixed: to it every hand is turned.

But every sinner would feel, that *all these things were against him.* His affections are only selfish; and his designs concentre solely in private, separate ends, and in interests opposed to the general welfare. His only scheme of happiness, also, is to gain enjoyment from others, and never to find it in doing good to others. This is a subject, of which, as a source of enjoyment, he forms not a single conception. All his plans for happiness are matters of mere bargain and sale; in every instance of which he intends to get the advantage of those, with whom he deals. Good, to him, is good, only when it is separate and selfish; and he knows not what it is to see his own happiness enlarged by the general participation.

In the great, commanding, and sole pursuit of the heavenly world, a sinner would be unable to unite at all. Every wish of his heart must oppose the wishes and designs of all around him, and the great object, for which heaven itself was formed by the Creator; which renders it delightful in his eye; and for which he has gathered into it the Assembly of the First-born. Of course, he would be alone; separated from his companions by a character, totally opposite to theirs; hostile to them in all his wishes, and pursuits; marked by them as an alien; despised as useless and worthless; pitied as miserable; and loathed as sinful.

Sin is the real and only cause of the wretchedness, experienced in the present world; and, the immediate, as well as the original, cause of the woes, experienced in the regions of perdition. Were sinners admitted into heaven, the same lust, fraud, and cruelty; the same injustice, oppression, and violence; in a word, the same wickedness and wo, which prevail in *this* world; would revive in *that.* Of course, the whole system of happiness, begun there, and intended to be carried on throughout eternity, would be either prevented, or destroyed. That God should permit these evils to exist, is incredible, and in my view impossible.

4thly. *It is absolutely necessary that this change should be accomplished in this present world.*

The present state is, to man, the only state of probation. All beyond the grave is a state of reward. The reward ought plainly to be such, as to suit the character of every probationer; a true testimony of God to his real character; a reward such as he has merited; and such as a righteous God may be expected to bestow. Of course, the testimony, actually given, must be a testimony to the character, with which he leaves this world of probation, and with which he goes to the Judgment.

Besides, Man enters *that* world with the very same character, with which he leaves *this.* Death makes no moral change in man; but is a mere passage from one state of being to another; a mere

dismission from *this* world to *that*, of the probationer from his probation. A simple termination of the animal functions, a mere separation of the soul from the body, plainly cannot alter the moral state of the soul, or change at all its views, affections or character. Of this truth the Scriptures furnish abundant evidence. *Do*, says *Solomon*, *whatever thy hand findeth to do, with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom*, in *Sheol*, the world of departed Spirits, *whither thou goest. The night cometh*, saith our Saviour, that is, the night of death, *in which no man can work.* Both of these are direct declarations, that both the work, and the state, of probation, are terminated by the grave, and will never exist in the future world. Accordingly, no change in the character of man, either in the article of death, or at any succeeding period of existence, is indicated in the Scriptures. Of course, every man will appear at the judgment with the very character which he has when he leaves the present world; and in this character only will he be rewarded.

Accordingly, the Scriptures teach us, that we shall be judged according to *the deeds done in the body;* and *rewarded according to our works*, accomplished on this side of the grave. It is plain, then, that if men enter the future world, without being regenerated in this, they enter with all their sins upon their heads; and must be rewarded for their sins only. But a reward for sin can never be happiness. If, then, sinners are to be admitted into heaven at all, they must undergo this great change of moral character here; of sinners must become holy; must cease from their rebellion and disobedience; must bow their wills to the will of God; and must yield themselves to him as voluntary instruments of his glory.

II. *The Reality of this change in man may be satisfactorily evinced in the following manner.*

1st. *It is declared in the Scriptures.*

Besides the evidence, derived to the *reality* of regeneration from the absolute *necessity* of it to mankind, the Scriptures declares the existence of it in a great variety of forms. *Of his mercy he saved us*, says *St. Paul, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us, of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* To be sanctified is to be regenerated; and here it is declared, that *Christ is become, of God, sanctification* to all his children. *Ye have put off the old man with his deeds*, says *St. Paul*, to the *Colossians, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him. Put off*, says the same Apostle to the *Ephesians, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness.* In these passages of Scripture we are plainly taught the following things.

1st. That the natural character is considered by the Apostle as differing from the regenerated according to the full import of these two names: *the old man*, and *the new man:*

2dly. That the regenerated character is a new character:

3dly. That the assumption of this new character is equivalent to *being renewed, or created anew:* both of these expressions being used to denote it:

4thly. That the former character, or *old man*, is a corrupt character, conformed to *deceitful lusts*, or under the influence of such lusts:

5thly. That *the new man*, or new character, *is created after*, or *in, the image of God:*

6thly. That *this image* consists *in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.*

*For we are his workmanship; created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* Eph. ii. 10. Here the *Ephesian* Christians are declared to be *the workmanship of God*, as to their Christian character; and to be *created in*, or *through, Christ Jesus unto good works.*

*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive, together with Christ*, or rather *by Christ.* Here, the former state of the *Ephesians* is declared to have been a state of *death in sins;* and their new state is declared to be a state of *life:* and this they are said to have derived from God. But *St. Paul* himself explains the import of this passage, if it needs explanation, by informing us, that *to be carnally minded is death; and that to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* Saints also are said *to be sanctified, to be washed, to be purified*, by the Spirit of God.

It is impossible, that the reality, or the greatness, or the importance, of this change should be expressed in stronger or more definite terms. Those, who are the subjects of it, are said *to be made clean, pure, and holy; to have a new heart, a right spirit; to be renewed; to be born again; to be born of God; to be born of the Spirit of God; to be made alive from the dead; to be created anew; and to be new creatures.* Can any language more strongly declare, that a real change is made in the moral character of man? that he becomes the subject of a character altogether new, and never belonging to him before? As a child, when born, has a new state of existence; so he, who is born of God, has also a state of existence equally new to him. As a thing, when created, begins then first to have existence; so he, who is created anew, begins then to have spiritual existence. Accordingly, *St. Paul* says, 1 Cor. xiii. 2, *Without love I am nothing;* that is, without holiness, the love of the Gospel, I have no spiritual being; no existence in the Spiritual creation, or kingdom of God.

2dly. *The Reality of Regeneration is clearly proved by the Scriptural accounts of the first Christians.*

Of the conversion of these Christians, and their consequent character, we have ample accounts in the Acts, and the Epistles. Those who were *Jews*, we know beyond a doubt, were bitter and obstinate enemies, and furious persecutors, of Christ and his Apostles; hated the religion, which *they* taught; were bigoted votaries of a religion, consisting in mere external services; children of wrath, and children of disobedience. What the *Gentiles* were, is amply unfolded in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; where they are declared by *St. Paul* to be lost in absolute abandonment, and profligacy of character. Yet in consequence of the preaching of the Apostles, the same *Jews* and *Gentiles* assumed an entirely new character; and continued to exhibit it with increasing beauty throughout the remainder of their lives. Instead of their former fleshly works, enumerated by *St. Paul*, Gal. v. 19—21, they showed in all their *conversation*, *love*, *joy*, *peace*, *long-suffering*, *gentleness*, *goodness*, *faith*, *meekness*, and temperance; the divine and delightful fruits of the Spirit of Grace. Instead of persecuting Christians, they exhibited towards them all acts of kindness; and suffered persecution with them for the sake of the same glorious Redeemer. Instead of their former empty and merely ceremonious religion, they embraced the genuine piety, and pure morality, of the Gospel. All their intemperance, impurity, deceit, injustice, pride, and bigotry, they renounced; and in their place substituted, permanently, the sober, chaste, sincere, equitable, candid, and benevolent, spirit of the Christian system. Through life, they exhibited this spirit in every amiable form; and, at death, sealed this unexceptionable testimony with their blood.

Now it is certain, that *an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things; and a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.* It is certain, *that a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit.* In other words, the heart will always characterize the conduct. Whence then, let me ask, was the difference in the conduct of these *Jews and Gentiles*, *before*, and *after*, their conversion to Christianity? The only answer which can be given, consistently with these declarations of Christ, is, that their hearts, before corrupt, and proving themselves to be so, by a life distinguished by all kinds of wickedness, were now made holy; and were proved to be so, by a life adorned with every good work. To add to this decisive evidence, if it can be added to, it may be observed, that all the remaining *Jews and Gentiles*, who were not the subjects of this conversion, continued, still, to exhibit the same wickedness, which their countrymen had, also, before exhibited; and were just as odious in the sight of God and of man.

3dly. *The same truth is abundantly evident in the present experience of mankind.*

It cannot be asserted, to the satisfaction of a rational inquirer, that the external, visible change in the conduct of a man, who, be-

fore his regeneration, has with a good degree of uniformity exhibited a conscientious, becoming, and amiable life is, after his regeneration, so great, as to convince the mind, that he has experienced this radical alteration of character. Converse, however, even with such men, in a course of intimate Christian familiarity; and you will always find a radical difference in their views, sentiments, and conduct; a difference realized by themselves, and obvious to *you*. On this subject a Minister of the Gospel ought to be allowed to possess peculiar knowledge, because he has peculiar advantages for acquiring it. Ministers converse in this manner more extensively than any other class of mankind; and have, therefore, more various, and more abundant, opportunities of gaining an acquaintance with facts of this nature. These opportunities I have myself enjoyed; and have here declared nothing but what I have often witnessed.

Yet these are not the cases, which ought to be here insisted on. Instances, less liable to doubt and misconstruction, exist in numbers, amply sufficient to place the point in debate beyond every reasonable objection. Wherever known Infidels, or other open and gross sinners, have suddenly, and finally renounced not only their false opinions, but their evil practices; and have continued through life to profess uniformly the doctrines, and to exhibit regularly, and increasingly, the duties of Christianity; the case becomes decisive; and must, unless we cease to reason concerning human nature and human conduct upon known and established principles, satisfy every candid inquirer. The conduct in both cases proceeds from the heart. The state of the heart, therefore, or its moral character, was in the one case as opposite to what it was in the other, as the conduct. The evil conduct proceeded from an evil heart; the good conduct from a good heart; and this change of the heart from evil to good, or from sin to holiness, is the very change, which in the Scriptures is styled regeneration.

Among instances of this nature, *Col. Gardiner* may be mentioned as one; and the *Rev. John Newton* as another; both extraordinary, convincing, and, so far as I can see, unexceptionable. I have known a considerable number of instances, scarcely less extraordinary; some of them by unquestionable information; others by personal acquaintance. Two of these were examples of habitual drunkenness, perhaps the most hopeless of all evil habits; and the reformation was so entire, and the piety so evident, uniform, and long continued, as to leave no doubts in the minds of sober men, acquainted with the facts. A third instance, well meriting to be mentioned, was a young man of superior talents, formerly educated by me in this Seminary. He devoted himself to the profession of Medicine; and entered upon the practice with advantage. This youth was not only a determined infidel, but an open scoffer at the Bible, Christianity, Christians, and most other subjects of a religious nature. All these he exposed with a pungency of wit, and

keenness of satire, which few men are capable of employing, and which very few are willing to employ in the same open, gross manner. After some years, spent in this violent course of wickedness, he became seriously alarmed, (I know not on what occasion) concerning his sinful character, and future destiny. If I remember right, he almost, or entirely, despaired, for a time, of the mercy of God; and considered his perdition as sealed. At length, however, he acquired hopes of salvation; and manifested in his conduct the spirit of Christianity, so evidently and uniformly, as to excite a settled conviction in the minds of those around him, that he was sincerely a Christian. With entirely new views and purposes, he then quitted the medical profession, and entered upon the study of Theology. After some time he was regularly inducted into the Ministry of the Gospel; and sustained to his death, which happened about twelve or fifteen years afterwards, the character of an able, faithful, and unblameable Minister of Christ.

Instances, of this nature generally, I could multiply extensively, but the time forbids me to proceed any farther in this part of my subject.

4thly. *The state of Christianity in the world at large may be fairly adduced as a convincing proof of the reality of this change.*

The history of real Christianity is not to be sought for in the accounts, given us of the life, policy, ambition, and violence, of such Rulers, Statesmen, and Warriors, as have assumed the Christian name. The real nature, and influence, of the religion of Christ, are not to be sought for in Camps and Cabinets, in Courts and Palaces. These are the seats of pride and luxury, ambition and cunning, wrath and revenge. Christianity, here, is only put on as an upper garment, to adorn the character, to comport with the fashion, or to cover unchristian designs. I do not intend, that this is always the case. There are undoubtedly good men to be found even here. But I mean, that it is much more generally the case, than a good man would wish, or be willing, it should be. When Infidels take their accounts of Christianity from the proceedings of the great; from their luxury, statecraft, conquests, and persecutions; they do not, and probably intend not to do, any justice to the subject. In these accounts they impose on their readers, and perhaps on themselves. But they deceive no man of common candour, and tolerable information.

The real effects of Christianity on mankind are to be sought, and found, in still life, quiet society, peaceful neighbourhoods, and well ordered families. Here a thousand kind offices are done, and a thousand excellencies manifested, of which the great and splendid rarely form a conception; and which, nevertheless, present the human character to the view of the mind with an aspect incomparably more lovely than any other.

But, even on the great scale of examination, Christianity has meliorated the affairs of this unhappy world in such a degree, as,

if thoroughly examined, strongly to evince the truth of this doctrine. If we compare the state of Christian nations, especially the most enlightened and virtuous of them, with that of the most improved Heathen nations; the only fair mode of instituting a comparison; we shall see ample proof of such a melioration of the human character, as can be justly attributed to nothing but this important change of the human heart. Christianity has removed, from among the nations who profess it, polygamy; the selling of children, as slaves, by their parents; the general and brutal degradation of women; the belief of the rectitude of slavery; the supposed right of masters to kill their slaves; the exposure of parents, in their old age, to be devoured by wild beasts; the same exposure of children by their parents; the sacrificing of human victims; the wanton destruction of human life, for amusement, in public games; the impure, brutal, and sanguinary worship, practised in the regions of idolatry; together with many of the horrors of war, and captivity, and many other enormous evils of a similar nature. At the same time, it has introduced milder and more equitable government; established equitable laws, by which nations have, in a considerable degree, regulated their intercourse; given a new sanction to treaties; provided legal support for the poor and suffering; secured the rights of strangers; erected hospitals for the sick, and alms-houses for the indigent; formed, with great expense, a rich variety of institutions for the preservation, and education, of orphans; the instruction of poor children; the suppression of vice; the amendment of the vicious; and the consolation of the afflicted. It has made better rulers, and better subjects; better husbands, and better wives; better parents, and better children; better neighbours, and better friends. It has established the rational worship of the One, Living, and True God; built churches, in which all men do, or may, worship him, and learn their duty; and, with immense expense, has sent, and is sending, these blessings to the ends of the earth. Whence this difference? Not from the difference of light. The *Greeks* and *Romans* were sufficiently enlightened at least to have begun this progress. But they did not take a single step towards real reformation. All that can be said is, *their* wickedness was a little more polished, than that of their barbarian neighbours. No; it has sprung from that *honest and good heart*, which is not in man by nature, but is given him by the Spirit of God. Such hearts, found here and there, like dispersed stars, seen through the interstices of a clouded sky, diffuse a feeble radiance over Christian countries, and prevent the otherwise absolute darkness. *Howard*, intensely illumined with the benevolence of the Gospel, shed a lustre over the whole Christian world. Inferior lights are every where scattered; and their combined influence is every where felt. Were the same character that of all men; the change in human affairs would be such, as to

demand no arguments to prove a change of heart. As the state of things is, it is plain, that the spirit of the Martyrs was not in their persecutors: the spirit of *Howard* was not in *Voltaire*: the spirit of *Alfred* was not in *Frederick II.* He, who cannot see this, is unable because he will not; and may be well assured, that under the influence of his present temper he has lost the power of moral discrimination.

# SERMON LXXIV.

REGENERATION.—ITS NATURE.

JOHN iii. 3.—*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

HAVING in the preceding discourse considered the *Necessity* and the *Reality*, of Regeneration, I shall now proceed, according to the plan proposed, to examine its *Nature*.

1st. *This change of heart consists in a Relish for Spiritual objects, communicated to it by the power of the Holy Ghost.*

By Spiritual objects I intend the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, Heaven, Angels, the Word and the Worship of God, Virtuous men, Virtuous affections, Virtuous conduct, and all the kinds of enjoyment found in the contemplation of these objects; the exercise of these affections, and the practice of this conduct. The existence of these objects every man admits; and every man, at all conversant with human life, must admit that a part of mankind profess to relish them, and to find in them real and sincere pleasure. A sober man must further admit, that, as the Creator of all things is infinitely more excellent than any other being, so his excellence must be capable, in the nature of things, not only of being perceived, but also of being relished by intelligent creatures. No man, who has any regard to his character as a man of sound understanding, will acknowledge, that excellence exists; and yet deny, that it is capable of being perceived and relished. Nor will any such man deny, that intelligent creatures may perceive the excellence of the Creator to be plainly superior to that of any other being, and may relish it accordingly. It must also be easily and certainly seen, that, if we relish the excellency of the Creator himself, we cannot fail to extend the same relish to every thing, in which this excellence is displayed: since this will be no other than relishing the excellence itself, as it is manifested in different forms. It must be obvious, therefore, that this relish for the Divine excellence, once existing, must of course be extended to all the objects, in which it is displayed, and to all those intelligent beings, by whom it is relished.

It has been frequently supposed, that *the Spirit of God regenerates man by immediately creating in him virtuous volitions.* All the volitions of all moral agents are, in my view, as will indeed be pre-supposed by those of my audience, who remember the sermons which I delivered on the nature of the human soul, the acts of the agents themselves. The Spirit of God does not, in my view, when he regenerates mankind, create in them any volitions what-

ever; but merely communicates to them the relish for Spiritual objects, which has been here mentioned.

When God created *Adam*, there was a period of his existence after he began to be, antecedent to that in which he exercised the first volition. Every man, who believes the mind to be *something beside ideas and exercises*, and who does not admit the doctrine of casualty, will acknowledge, that in this period the mind of *Adam* was in such a state, that he was propense to the exercise of virtuous volitions rather than of sinful ones. This state of mind has been commonly styled *disposition*, *temper*, *inclination*, *heart*, &c. In the Scriptures it usually bears the last of these names. I shall take the liberty to call it *disposition*. This disposition in *Adam* was the cause, whence his virtuous volitions proceeded; the reason, why they were virtuous, and not sinful. Of the metaphysical nature of this cause I am ignorant. But its existence is, in my own view, certainly proved by its effects. If the volitions of man are not immediately created, they are either caused by something in Man, or they are casual. But they are not casual; for nothing is casual. And even if some things were casual, these could not be; because they were regularly and uniformly virtuous: and it is impossible, that casualty should be the source of uniformity, or regularity. There was, therefore, in the mind of *Adam*, certainly, a cause, which gave birth to the fact, that his volitions were virtuous, and not sinful. This cause, of necessity, preceded these volitions; and therefore certainly existed in that state of mind, which was previous to his first volition. This state of mind, then, this disposition of *Adam*, existing antecedently to every volition, was the real cause, why his volitions, subsequently existing, were virtuous. It ought to be remarked here, that plain men, with truth, as well as with good sense, ascribe all the volitions of mankind to *disposition*, the very thing here intended, as their true cause.

In regeneration, the very same thing is done by the Spirit of God for the soul, which was done for *Adam* by the same Divine Agent at his creation. The soul of *Adam* was *created* with a relish for Spiritual objects. The soul of every man, who becomes a Christian, is *renewed* by the communication of the same relish. In *Adam*, this disposition produced virtuous volitions. In every child of *Adam*, who becomes the subject of virtue, it produces the same effects.

It will, perhaps, be objected to this view of the subject, that God is said *to work in us both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.* Phil. ii. 13. Indeed, this passage formerly appeared to me to indicate, that God exercised a different agency on the mind of man from that, which has been here described. But an examination of the passage has convinced me, that my views of it, at that time, were erroneous. For,

1st. *The communication of this relish is as truly followed by virtuous willing, and doing*, as the creative act would be, which might

immediately give existence to our volitions, and our conduct. If, then, God communicates to us such a relish or such a disposition, causing in us holy volitions and actions; he is as truly said to *work in us* both these things, as he could be, if he immediately created them. The only difference in this respect is, that they are now *mediately*, and would be then *immediately*, the effects of his agency.

2dly. *The word, here translated worketh, in the Greek* ενεργων, *inworketh*, which characterizes the nature of the agency, is in Eph. ii. 2, applied to *Satan* in this manner: *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* Now it will not be said, that *Satan creates* evil volitions in the minds of *the children of disobedience.* As the word is in both cases the same, it does not indicate of itself, in the objected passage, that the immediate production of virtuous volitions by the power of God is the thing intended.

I will only add, on this subject, that the relish for spiritual objects is that, which in the Scriptures is called, *a new heart, a right spirit, an honest and good heart, a spiritual mind*, and denoted by several other names of a similar import. Thus *a Good man out of the good treasure of his heart* is said *to bring forth good things.* Thus, also, *they who received the seed in good ground*, as exhibited in the parable of the sower, are said to be *such, as, in an honest and good heart, having received the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.* In these and the like instances, the heart is exhibited as the source of all virtuous volitions, desires, and conduct. This relish for spiritual objects is, I apprehend, this very source of these interesting things.

2dly. *This change of the heart is the Commencement of holiness in the mind.*

*The carnal mind*, that is, the original, natural disposition of man, *is enmity against God; not subject to his Law; neither indeed can be.* Before this change, therefore, there is no holiness in the character; no relish for spiritual good; no exercise of virtuous volitions; no pursuit of virtuous conduct. All these things begin to be chosen, and to be practised, after they begin to be relished; and the first relish for them exists in this renovation of the mind.

3dly. *This change is partial.*

After Regeneration the native character of man still remains; his relish for sinful pursuits and enjoyments still continues; and his relish for spiritual pursuits and enjoyments is never perfected on this side of the grave.

In this state, man exhibits to the view of the Universe an object, unlike any thing else which it has ever beheld. All other intelligent creatures, so far as we are informed, are either perfectly virtuous, or wholly destitute of real virtue. But regenerated man is really virtuous, and yet really sinful: his true and entire character being a mixture of moral good and evil. This mixed character is pre-

sented to us by *St. Paul* in the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, by the phrases, *the Law in the members*, and *the Law of the mind*. These, he informs us, are totally contrary characters, warring in the same soul against each other, and carrying on a continual controversy while life remains. We are, however, abundantly taught, that the holy or virtuous disposition, *like the house of David, waxes stronger and stronger;* and the sinful disposition, like *the house of Saul, weaker and weaker*. This increase of strength on the one hand, and this diminution of it on the other, is not indeed regular, constant, and always discernible; but it is yet irregularly progressive to the end of life. There are seasons, in which the *Law in the members brings the Law of the mind into captivity*. *David* committed adultery with *Bathsheba*. *Peter* denied his Master; and dissembled with *the Jews* that went to *Antioch*. *John* and *James* proposed to call for fire from heaven upon the inhabitants of a *Samaritan village*. The disciples, as a body, contended *who of them should be the greatest*, and all *forsook* their Master in the garden of *Gethsemane, and fled*. Still all of them were better men near the close of life, than at any preceding period. What was true of them is true of every good man. He will, upon the whole, improve through life; and will, ordinarily, year by year, though not without various interruptions and backslidings, become a better Christian. Yet perfection in holiness is never found in the present world. *If we say we have no sin*, says *St. John*, speaking of himself and all other Christians, 1 John i. 8, *we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*.

4thly. *Notwithstanding the partial nature of this change, it is still the foundation of perpetual holiness.*

*Verily, verily, I say unto you*, saith our Saviour, *he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life;* and *shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life;* or, as it is in the original, *hath passed*, that is, already, *from death unto life*. It naturally seems mysterious, that imperfect holiness should in this case be perpetual; when the perfect holiness of *Adam*, and the perfect holiness of Angels, was terminated by Apostacy. The explanation of this mystery lies, it is presumed, in this peculiar fact; that those, who are the subjects of this imperfect holiness, are the seed, promised to Christ in the Covenant of Redemption, as the reward of his labours and sufferings. It certainly is not in *the nature of the holiness:* for this in all the cases specified is the same. *It is not in the degree:* for that was greater in those who fell, than in those who endure. In those who fell it was perfect, so long as it continued. In those who endure it is always imperfect, and often interrupted by backsliding. *It is not in the nature of the subjects*. The Angels, who fell, were superior in their nature to all men; and the perfect nature of *Adam* was superior to that of his unsanctified children. Yet the perseverance of every saint, remote as his character is from perfection, is secur-

ed by the promise of God, and carried into complete and final accomplishment by the power of his Spirit. Of this enduring holiness regeneration is the basis; and the subject of it never ceases to be holy while he lives.

5thly. *This change is the source of new views of Spiritual and Divine subjects.*

These views, united, constitute what is often termed *spiritual knowledge*, *divine knowledge*, *spiritual light*, and *divine light*. As the opinions of Divines, and other Christians, have been different concerning this subject; it will be proper to consider it with particular attention.

It has been extensively supposed, that the Spirit of Grace regenerates mankind by communicating to them new, clearer, and juster views of spiritual objects. The understanding being thus enlightened and convinced, the heart, it is supposed, yields itself to this conviction; and the man spontaneously becomes, under its influence, a child of God. I shall not attempt, here, to describe the Metaphysical nature of the work of regeneration, nor to define, precisely, the manner, in which it is accomplished; nor the exact bounds of the Divine, and human, agency in this great concern. Of these subjects I have not sufficiently distinct and comprehensive views, to undertake this employment with any satisfactory hope of success. Yet it appears to me clear, that the account, which I have now given of this subject, is not Scriptural, nor just. Without a *relish* for spiritual objects, I cannot see that any discoveries concerning them, however clear and bright, can render them pleasing to the soul. If they are unpleasing in their very nature, they cannot be made agreeable by having that nature unfolded more clearly. He, who disrelishes the taste of wine, will not relish it the more, the more distinctly, and perfectly, he perceives that taste. Nor will any account of its agreeableness to others, however clearly given, and with whatever evidence supported, render the taste agreeable to him. To enable him to relish it, it seems indispensable, that his own taste should be changed, and in this manner fitted to realize the pleasantness of the wine. *Light* is either evidence, or the perception of it; evidence of the true nature of the object, which is contemplated, or the perception of that evidence. But the great difficulty, in the present case, is this: the nature of the object perceived is disrelished. The more, then, it is perceived, the more it must be disrelished of course, so long as the present taste continues. It seems, therefore, indispensable, that, in order to the usefulness of such superior light to the mind, its relish with respect to spiritual objects should first be changed. In this case, the clearer and brighter the views of such objects are, the more pleasing they may be expected to become to the mind.

This, I apprehend, is the true progress of this work in the human soul. A relish for all spiritual objects, never before existing

in him, is communicated to every man, who is the subject of regeneration, by the Spirit of God. Before this event, he disrelished all such objects: now, he relishes them all. Before, he was an enemy of God: now, he becomes a friend to God: before, he loved nothing, now, he loves every thing, of a spiritual nature. He who has hitherto been an enemy to a good man, disrelishes every thing which pertains to him; his character, conduct, conversation, and opinions; his family, his friends, his very looks, nay, even the spot where he lives; and, in a word, every thing which is his. If you undertake to convince him, while this disrelish continues, that the object of his dislike is undeserving of all this; you may, indeed, present to him arguments, which he cannot answer, and silence his objections, by the irresistible force of proof. You may explain to him, in the clearest manner, the excellencies of this object; and set them in such a light, that he may have nothing left to say against it. Should all this have been done, his dislike in the case supposed, would still continue: his views, though enlarged, would be of exactly the same general nature: and his opposition to the hated object, instead of being diminished, would rather increase. We will now suppose this man to cease from his enmity, and to become a decided and sincere friend. A moment's thought will satisfy any mind, that with the change of his relish, an universal change of his views, also, will take place. The very same things which formerly disgusted him, will now please him. What was formerly odious will now become amiable. The evidences of worth and excellence, which before silenced, will now satisfy him. His eye, no longer jaundiced, will see every thing in its proper, native light; in its true character, importance, and desert; and will discern in what was before unpleasing, deformed, or disgusting, a beauty, loveliness, and lustre, wholly new.

This allusion will distinctly explain my own views of both the source, and the nature, of Spiritual light. When the relish for spiritual objects is communicated to the mind, the enmity of the man towards these objects is converted into good-will. He now becomes a friend to God and to his Law, to truth and to duty. Over these and all other objects, of the same general nature, he sees a new character diffused, of which, before, he did not form a single conception. Where they were before disgusting, they are now pleasing. Where they were before tasteless, they are now relished. Where they were before deformed, they are now beautiful. Where they were before odious, they are now lovely. The reason is; he now beholds them with new eyes. Before, he saw them with the eyes of an enemy; now he sees them with those of a friend. The optics, which he formerly possessed, spread over them an adventitious and false colouring, altogether foreign to their nature, and exhibiting that nature under an universal disguise. These optics are now purified; and he sees all these objects as they really are; in their true colours, their native beauty, and their

inherent splendour. This is what I understand by *the Spiritual light*, derived from regeneration.

6thly. *This change is instantaneous.*

This position has been as much controverted, as any of those advanced in this discourse; but, as it seems to me, with no solid support either from reason or Revelation.

The scheme of those who oppose this doctrine appears, generally, to have been this: The subject of regeneration is supposed to begin, at some time or other, to turn his attention to Spiritual concerns. He begins seriously to think on them; to read concerning them; to dwell upon them in the house of God, in his meditations, in his closet, and in his conversation. By degrees he gains a more thorough acquaintance with the guilt and danger of sin, and the importance of holiness, pardon, acceptance, and salvation. By degrees also, he renounces one sinful practice, and propensity, after another; and thus finally arrives at a *neutral character*, in which he is neither a sinner, in the absolute sense, nor yet a Christian. Advancing from this stage, he begins, at length, to entertain, in a small degree, virtuous affections, and to adopt virtuous conduct; and thus proceeds from one virtuous attainment to another, while he lives. Some of the facts here supposed, taken separately, are real: for some of them undoubtedly take place in the minds, and lives, of those who become religious men. But the whole, considered together, and as a scheme concerning this subject, is, in my view, entirely erroneous.

Were we to allow the scheme to be correct, and Scriptural, still, the consequence usually drawn from it, that regeneration is gradually accomplished, is untrue. Regeneration, according to every scheme, is the commencement of holiness in the mind. Without calling in question the doctrine, that man in the moral sense is ever neutral, it is intuitively certain, that a man is, at every given period of his life, either holy, or not holy. There is a period, in which every man who becomes holy at all, first becomes holy. At a period, immediately antecedent to *this*, whenever it takes place, he was not holy. The commencement of holiness in his mind was, therefore, instantaneous; or began to exist at some given moment of time. Nor is it in the nature of things possible, that the fact should be otherwise. All that can be truly said to be gradual, with respect to this subject, is either that process of thought and affection which precedes regeneration, or that course of improvement in holiness by which it is followed. But neither of these things is intended in the Scriptures, nor ought to be intended in the conversation and writings of Christians, by the word *regeneration.*

It is often objected to the instantaneousness of regeneration, *that the change is too great to be accomplished in a moment.* Most of the persons, who make this objection, aim, I am persuaded, at what is customarily called by Divines *the work of sanctification;* that is, *the Christian's advancement in holiness, after he is regene-*

*rated.* This, plainly, is in fact, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures, a work, which is progressive through life. It may well seem strange, for it certainly is untrue, that sanctification, in this sense, should be instantaneous.

By those, who admit that agency of the Spirit of God in renewing mankind, which has been exhibited in these discourses, the instantaneousness of this change has it is believed never been denied. The act of turning from sin to holiness in the first instance, on the part of man, and the act of communicating a disposition thus to turn, on the part of the Spirit of God, are, in their own nature, so obviously accomplished in a moment; that it seems difficult to conceive how any person, considering them with attention, can have supposed them to be progressive. In the Scriptures, the accounts of this combined subject every where teach us, that it exists instantaneously. The phraseology, by which it is chiefly denoted in the Scriptures, strongly indicates, that this is its nature. It is exhibited to us under the expressions, *Being born again; being created anew; having a new heart, and a right spirit, created within us; turning to God; turning from darkness to light;* and others of a like nature. All these expressions originally denote events, instantaneously existing; and in their figurative application indicate the instantaneousness of the fact, to which they are applied.

The same thing we are taught in the accounts, given in the Scriptures of this fact, as having actually taken place. Thus the *three thousand Jews*, who were converted by the first sermon of *St. Peter*, yielded themselves to God at that moment. Such, also, was the conversion of *Dionysius; Damaris; Sergius Paulus;* the *Jailer;* and, generally, of the great multitudes, whose conversion is recorded in *the Acts of the Apostles.* Such, also, was that of the Nobleman of *Capernaum;* the father of the Epileptic child; the woman of *Samaria*, and her fellow-citizens; and the thief upon the cross.

7thly. *This change, as to the time, and manner, of its existence, is ordinarily imperceptible by him who is the subject of it.*

There have not been wanting heretofore; *there are not now wanting; persons holding the name of Christians*, and those in considerable numbers, who profess to know the time, and manner, of their regeneration, and to have been conscious at the time of the existence of this change in their moral character; and who accordingly recite all this to each other without any apparent doubt of the soundness of the recital; nay, who make this a subject of public investigation, with respect to all those, who offer themselves as candidates for admission into their churches. By such men the existence of this change is considered as so manifest, whenever it takes place, that they are able to point out the day, the place, and all the attendant circumstances. From the confidence, with which they speak on this subject, it has perhaps arisen, that many others, who do not go the same length, still go a part of it; and believe, in an indefinite manner, that these things *may*, at least, *be discerned*,

*and remembered, with probability;* that they are to be sought for; that the want of being conscious of them, and of remembering them, is an unhappy event, not experienced by more favoured Christians; nay, by most Christians. Accordingly, the want of this knowledge and remembrance is regarded by such men, however exemplary their lives may be afterwards, as involving a defect in the proper evidence, that they are Christians. However *good the fruit* may be, which *they bring forth;* instead of determining by *the taste*, that it is good, they feel unsatisfied with this mode of proof: and wish rather to rely on some discovery, which they consider as practicable, of the time and the place, at which the bough producing the fruit, was ingrafted.

All these are, I apprehend, opinions wholly unscriptural, and of course deceitful and dangerous. For,

1st. *The Scriptures no where refer us to the Time, or Manner, of our regeneration, for evidence, that we are regenerated.* If the time and manner of our regeneration were certainly known by us; it is intuitively evident, that our regeneration itself would be equally well known. If this, then, were the case, it is incredible, that the Scriptures should not, even in a single instance, refer us to so completely satisfactory a source of evidence, to determine us finally in this mighty concern; but should, at the same time, direct us to the so much less perfect evidence, furnished by the subsequent state of our affections and conduct. *By their fruits shall ye know them,* says our Saviour. *Then are ye my disciples indeed, if ye keep my commandments. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, is my disciple.* These are the rules, by which, together with others of exactly the same nature, we are directed in the Scriptures to judge of our moral state. But these rules are not only superfluous, but useless, if the time, the manner, or the fact, of our regeneration were ordinarily known by us. For these, and each of these, would furnish evidence of this subject, completely decisive, as to the state of all men. He, who knew these things, would certainly know, that he was a Christian: he, who did not, would certainly know, that he was not a Christian. No other rule, therefore, could ever be needed, or could ever be employed. According to this scheme, then, Christ and the Apostles have devised an imperfect rule, to direct us in our decisions concerning this interesting subject; while uninspired men, of modern times, have by their ingenuity fortunately found out a perfect one.

2dly. *The relish for spiritual good,* and *the exercise of holy affections, are, at their commencement, certainly no more distinguishable, than the same relish and the same exercises, in the same mind, usually are afterwards.* Men sometimes seem to suppose, that in *these first acts of a virtuous mind* there is something extraordinary and peculiar. All that makes them extraordinary is, that they are the first. In the degree, in which they exist, they are, usually,

among the least remarkable. There is, of course, nothing to make them distinguished, except the mere fact, that they are the first.

But no person needs to be told, that the subsequent holy exercises are so far from being certainly known to be such, that they are, ordinarily, at the best believed, and in most instances merely hoped, to be of this character. If, then, the first holy exercises are not more distinguishable than the subsequent ones, and the subsequent ones are only distinguishable in such a degree as sometimes to be believed, and at most times merely hoped, to be of this character; then it is certain, that the time, the manner, and even the fact, of regeneration, are so far from being clearly known, in all ordinary cases, that they can never be relied on with safety, if considered by themselves only. Much less can they be regarded with undoubting confidence.

3dly. *Multitudes of those, who have professed, with much apparent assurance, to know all these things concerning themselves, have afterwards fallen off, and become sometimes lukewarm professors of Christianity, and sometimes open apostates.* This fact, which is by no means uncommon among persons, holding the opinion here censured, clearly proves, that the reliance, which is placed on the knowledge professed, is often unfounded, and may be always. That, which has frequently deceived *our fellow-men*, ought ever to be supposed to be capable of deceiving *us*.

The truth is; the infusion of a relish for divine things into the mind is *a breathing of the Spirit of life on dry bones*, perceivable only by its effects: like the communication of the animating principle to the embryo, real, yet not discernible in itself, but in the consequences which it produces. Were the case otherwise, *St. Paul* could never have asked the *Corinthian Christians, Know ye not your own selves?* Nor directed them to *prove themselves, whether they were in the faith.* Were the contrary opinion just, this Apostle would certainly have appealed to the time, place, and manner, of his own regeneration, which were probably better known to him, than the same things ever were to any child of God, as proofs of the fact, that he was regenerated. But this he never does. On the contrary, the evidence, on which he relied, was furnished by the fruits of holiness, apparent in his life.

## REMARKS.

From the observations, which have been made concerning this subject, it is evident, *that the work of regeneration is worthy of the Spirit of God.*

*Regeneration is a change of the temper, or disposition*, or, in other words, *of the heart, of man; and, by consequence, of his whole character.* The heart is the great controlling power of a rational being; the whole of that energy, by which he is moved to action. The moral nature of this power, therefore, will be the moral nature of the man. If this be virtuous, all his other faculties will be ren-

dered means of virtue; if sinful, the means of sin. Thus regeneration will affect the whole man; and govern all his character, powers, and conduct.

Regeneration is of the highest importance to man, as a subject of the Divine Government. With his former disposition, he was a rebel against God: with this he becomes cheerfully an obedient subject. Of an enemy he becomes a friend; of an Apostate he becomes a child. His obedience is henceforth filial, accepted of God, and useful to the Universe. From the debased, hateful, miserable character of sin he makes a final escape; and begins the glorious and eternal career of virtue. The deformity, disgrace, and contempt, of which sin is the parent, and the substance, he exchanges for moral excellence, loveliness, and beauty.

With his character, his destination is equally changed. In his native condition he was a child of wrath, an object of abhorrence, and an heir of wo. Evil, in an unceasing and interminable progress, was his lot; the regions of sorrow and despair, his everlasting home; and fiends, and fiend-like men, his eternal companions. His own bosom was the house of remorse; while a conscience, unceasingly wounded by his sin, held up to his eye the image of guilt, and the predictions of misery; and filled him with immoveable terror and amazement. On his character good beings looked with detestation, and on his ruin, with pity: while evil beings beheld both with that satanic pleasure, which a reprobate mind can enjoy at the sight of companionship in turpitude and destruction.

But, when he becomes the subject of this great and happy change of character, all things connected with him are also changed. His unbelief, impenitence, hatred of God, rejection of Christ, and resistance to the Spirit of grace, he has voluntarily and ingenuously renounced. No more rebellious, impious, or ungrateful, he has assumed the amiable spirit of submission, repentance, confidence, hope, gratitude, and love. The image of his Maker is instamped on his mind; and begins there to shine with moral and eternal beauty. The seeds of immortality have there sprung up, as in a kindly soil; and, warmed by the life-giving beams of the Sun of righteousness, and refreshed by the dewy influence of the Spirit of Grace, rise, and bloom, and flourish, with increasing vigour. In him, sin, and the flesh, and the world, daily decay, and daily announce their approaching dissolution: while the soul continually assumes new life and virtue, and is animated with superior and undying energy. He is now a joint heir with Christ, and the destined inhabitant of heaven. The gates of glory and of happiness are already opened to receive him; and the joy of Saints and Angels has been renewed over his repentance. All around him is peace: all before him purity and transport. God is his Father; Christ his Redeemer; and the Spirit of Truth his Sanctifier. Heaven is his eternal habitation: virtue is his immortal character: and seraphim, and cherubim, and all the children of light, are his

companions for ever. Henceforth he becomes, of course, a rich blessing to the Universe. All good beings, nay, God himself, will rejoice in him for ever, as a valuable accession to the great kingdom of righteousness, as a real addition to the mass of created good, and as a humble, but faithful, and honourable, instrument of the everlasting praise of heaven. He is a vessel of infinite mercy; an illustrious trophy of the cross; a gem in the crown of glory, which adorns the Redeemer of mankind.

Of all these sublime attainments, these exalted blessings, these divine allotments, Regeneration is the beginning. What, then, can be more worthy of the Spirit of truth? What effort in creation, what event in providence, is more becoming his character? The rise of an empire, the formation of a world, is a poor and humble display of infinite perfection, compared with the sanctification of an immortal mind. In the progress of eternity, one such mind will enjoy more good, exercise more virtue, and display more excellency of character, than this great world of men has ever enjoyed, exercised, or displayed. Accordingly, God himself divinely characterizes this illustrious work in the following magnificent terms: *For behold I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever, in that which I create; for behold! I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.* Of such importance and glory is the new creation, or regeneration, of the soul of man, that, in comparison with it, the original formation of the heavens and the earth is, in the Divine eye, unworthy even of being remembered. It was, therefore, a work proper for God the Father to contrive; for God the Son to procure even with his own death; and for God the Holy Spirit to accomplish with his life-giving and almighty power, in the souls of the guilty, ruined, and perishing children of *Adam*.

# SERMON LXXV.

REGENERATION.—ITS ANTECEDENTS.

ACTS xvi. 29, 30.—*Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas: And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

HAVING, in the two preceding discourses, considered *the Necessity, the Reality, and the Nature of Regeneration*, I shall now proceed to give *a history of this important work, as it usually exists in fact;* and shall attempt *to exhibit its Antecedents, its Attendants, and its Consequents. The first* of these subjects shall occupy the present discourse.

The text is a part of the story of *the Jailer*, to whose charge *Paul* and *Silas* were committed by the magistrates of *Philippi*, with a particular direction that he should *keep them safely.* To comply with this direction, *he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.* In this situation, at midnight, *they prayed, and sang praises to God. Suddenly there was a great earthquake; so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.* But *Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

The man who is the principal subject of this story, had been educated a heathen, and, until a short time before the events specified in it, took place, was totally ignorant of the Christian religion. Within this period he must have been present, and I think not unfrequently, at the preaching of *Paul* and *Silas:* otherwise, he could not have known, that there was such a thing as salvation. Probably he was induced, in common with his fellow-citizens, to hear their discourses merely as a gratification of curiosity. Whatever was the motive, it is plain, he had gained some knowledge of a Saviour; and had learned, that through Him men might, in some manner or other, be saved.

The things, which he had known concerning these subjects, seem not, however, to have made any very deep impressions on his mind. Before the extraordinary events recorded in the verses immediately preceding the text, he appears not to have conversed

with these Ministers about his religious concerns, nor to have felt any peculiar anxiety concerning his guilt or his danger. On the contrary, we cannot hesitate to consider him, as clearly proved, by his severe treatment of them, to have been hitherto in a state of religious unconcern, a state of sinful coldness and quietude.

But at this time a change was wrought in the man, great and wonderful; a change, manifested in his conduct with the most unequivocal evidence. By what was this change accomplished? What was it, that of a heathen made this man a Christian? Was the cause found in the miraculous events, by which the change was immediately preceded? It would seem that many others, who were equally witnesses of these events, still continued to be heathen, and experienced no alteration of character. Beyond this, it is evident from the story, that the Jailer did not witness them at all; and that he did not awake out of sleep, until after the earthquake, and all its alarming effects, had terminated. Besides, when he had awaked, and concluded that the prisoners had made their escape, he determined to kill himself: an effort which refutes the supposition, that he had any just moral apprehensions, and proves him to have been solicitous only concerning his responsibility to the magistrates. He had, indeed, heard *Paul* and *Silas* preach; so had many others, who still continued to be heathen. Preaching, therefore, did not alone accomplish this change; otherwise it would have accomplished it in *them* also. An influence, not common to others, must have been felt by him; an influence, never felt by himself before, must now have produced this mighty alteration in his character.

The text presents him to us in the utmost agitation and distress, and as thus agitated and distressed concerning his *salvation*. *He called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* A little before, he had *thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks*. Immediately before, he was on the point of committing suicide; a gross and dreadful crime, which would have ruined him for ever. A little before, nay immediately before, he was a heathen; regardless of salvation; a foe to Christianity; and the hard-handed jailer of these Ministers of the Gospel.

But now he bade adieu to all these dispositions, and practices, at once; renounced his former heathenism and sin; and became a meek, humble, and pious follower of the Redeemer. Now he fell down at the feet of his prisoners, and relied implicitly on them, for direction concerning his eternal well-being.

A description of the state of this man's mind, in the progress of his Regeneration, must, in substance, be a description of the state of every mind, with respect to the same important subject. The events, preceding the work of Regeneration, are substantially the same in every mind; the work itself is the same; and its consequences are the same.

The first great division of this work, viz. what I have mentioned as *the Antecedents of Regeneration*, is commonly called *Conviction of sin.* Of this subject the Text is a strong illustration; and will very naturally conduct our thoughts to every thing, which will be necessary to it on the present occasion. The Jailer plainly laboured under powerful and distressing conviction of his own sin, and of the danger with which it was attended. Of this truth his conduct furnishes the most affecting proof. The state of Mind, which he experienced, and which this passage of Scripture describes, it is the design of this discourse to exhibit, under the following heads:

I. *The Cause;*

II. *The Nature;* and

III. *The Consequences; of Conviction of Sin.*

I. *The peculiar Cause of this Conviction is the Law of God.*

*By the Law*, saith *St. Paul, is the knowledge of sin.* As *sin is* merely *a transgression of the law;* and as, *where no law is, there is no transgression;* it is clear, beyond a question, that all knowledge of sin must be derived from the law. To discern that we are sinful, we must of course know the Rule of Obedience; and, comparing our conduct with that rule, must see in this manner, that our conduct is not conformed to the rule. In this way all knowledge of sin is obtained.

This, however, is not an account of the knowledge of sin, intended by *Conviction;* as that word is customarily used by Divines. The great body of sinners under the Gospel have, in some degree at least, this knowledge; and yet are not justly said to be convinced.

Conviction of sin denotes something beyond the common views of the mind concerning its sins; and is always *a serious, solemn, heartfelt sense of their reality, greatness, guilt, and danger.* This all sinners under the Gospel have not; as every man knows, who possesses a spirit of common observation; and peculiarly every man, who becomes a subject of this conviction. Every such man knows, that in his former, ordinary state, he had no such sense of sin.

To explain this subject, it is necessary to observe, that there is a total difference between merely *seeing, or understanding*, a subject, *and feeling* it. A man may contemplate, as a mere object of speculation and intellect, the downward progress of his own affairs towards bankruptcy and ruin; and have clear views of its nature and certainty; and still regard it as an object of mere speculation. Should he afterwards become a bankrupt, and thus be actually ruined, he will experience a state of mind entirely new, and altogether unlike any thing which he experienced before. He now *feels the subject:* before he only *thought on it with cool contemplation:* and, however clear his views were, they had no effect on his heart. His former views never moved him to a single

effort for the prevention of his ruin: those, which he now possesses, would have engaged him, had they existed at the proper time for this purpose, in the most vigorous exertions. Just such is the difference between the common views of sin, and those which are experienced under Religious Conviction. What, before, was only seen, is now realized and felt.

This also is accomplished by the Law; felt, as well as understood; brought home to the heart, and strongly realized by the sinner. This fact is thus forcibly described by *St. Paul: For I was alive without the law, once: but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. He was alive*, that is, in his own feelings, while he was *without the law;* or while the law was no more realized, than it is by mankind in their ordinary state; while it is acknowledged to be the law of God, but not seriously regarded, applied to themselves, nor felt to be a rule of duty, obliging them, indispensably, to obey.

*But when the commandment came.*—The commandment was before at a distance, scarcely seen, and scarcely regarded; but now *came* home to him; to his sober thoughts; his realizing apprehensions.

*Sin revived.*—Sin began, then, first to be perceived to be his true and distressing character. It arose out of the torpid state, in which it had seemed to exist before; and assumed new life, strength, and terror. Of consequence, he, who had hitherto considered himself, while he was inattentive to the nature and extent of the divine law, as a just man, safe, and acceptable to God, now *died;* now perceived himself to be a great and guilty sinner, condemned and perishing; and all his former safety, righteousness, and life, vanished in a moment.

Under conviction of sin, the law is applied by the sinner to himself, and considered as the rule of his own duty; the rule, by which his character is hereafter to be tried; and the rule, by which *he himself is now to try it.* Before this, no such views of the law had entered his mind: no such trial had ever been made. In this trial, the law is often, solemnly, critically, and effectually examined. Both its precepts and penalties are brought home, irresistibly, to the heart. Before, they were things with which the sinner had little or no concern. Now he finds them to be things, with which he is more deeply concerned than with any other.

II. *The Nature of this conviction may be unfolded in the following manner.*

In the ordinary circumstances of the mind, it is usually disposed to acknowledge that there is such a thing as sin; that it is in itself wrong, odious, mischievous to mankind, dishonourable to God, and deserving in some degree of punishment. It is usually ready to acknowledge, also, that itself is sinful, and of course exposed to the anger of God. With regard to sin, as with regard to the

law, its views are often, perhaps generally, just in a certain degree; but are loose, careless, and inefficacious; having no other effect on the mind than to produce, at seasons rare and solitary, some reproaches of conscience, and a degree of regret and fear, feeble, momentary, and easily forgotten.

But when the man becomes a subject of religious conviction, he feels, for the first time, that sin is a real and dreadful evil. For the first time, the law of God is seen to be a righteous and reasonable law, demanding nothing but what ought to be demanded, and forbidding nothing but what ought to be forbidden. Its precepts and its penalties are both yielded to, as just; and God is acknowledged to be righteous in prescribing the former, and inflicting the latter.

Himself he readily pronounces to be a sinner, universally debased, utterly blameable, justly condemned, and justly to be punished. Instead of self-justification, and self-flattery, he is now more ready to pronounce the sentence of condemnation on himself, than on any other person; and is hardly brought to admit the pleas, advanced by others in palliation of his guilt, or in the defence of his moral character. Sin, and his own sins especially, now appear as things new, strange, and wonderful; as evils awfully serious and alarming. The law of God is now applied to himself as his own rule of duty; and obedience to it is confessed to be reasonable, indispensable, and immensely important. Every violation of its precepts, therefore, is regarded by him as a sore and dreadful evil; as guilt, which he perceives no means of wiping away; and as danger, which he finds no opportunity of escaping. An accumulation of crimes innumerable, and of guilt incomprehensible, is thus seen to have been formed by the conduct of his whole life, which, to the anxious and terrified eye of the criminal, has already swollen to the size of mountains, and ascended to the height of heaven.

*These views*, it is to be remembered, *are wholly new to the sinner.* Their novelty, of course, greatly enhances, in his eye, the terrifying and oppressive magnitude of the subject. All new things affect us more, when new, than when by frequent repetition they have become familiar. Before, he never in sober earnest believed himself to be a sinner. To find himself, therefore, to be not only a sinner, but a sinner of so guilty and blameable a character, naturally overwhelms him with anguish and dismay.

*His mind*, also, *is now exceedingly alarmed, and distressed*, by this afflicting discovery. *On an agitated mind* all things, with which it is concerned, make deep impressions; deeper far than when it is at ease; and especially those things which produced the agitation. Such, particularly, is the fact *in this state of religious agitation.* For both these reasons, as well as from the real greatness and nature of his guilt, the convinced man is often ready to believe, that no sinner was ever so guilty as himself.

It is not uncommon to hear persons, of no singular depravity, declare, that they are doubtful whether *Judas* was equally a transgressor with themselves. I have heard doubts expressed by persons, of more than common decency and amiableness, whether *Satan* was not less odious to God than they were: and this reason has been alleged for the doubt, that he had never sinned against forgiving and redeeming love. It is not to be wondered at, that the soul, to which these awful subjects are thus new, and which is thus terrified by its first views of them, should be even excessive in its self-condemnation.

With the greatness of its guilt, *the greatness of its danger* keeps an equal pace. Scarcely any thing more naturally, or more commonly, occurs to the mind in this situation, than doubts, whether such guilt, as itself has accumulated, can be forgiven. *The Mercy of God*, which is declared in the Scriptures to be *greater than our sins*, *to be above the heavens*, *to extend to all generations*, and to endure for ever, is often doubted, so far as the sinner himself is concerned; admitted easily with regard to others, and with regard to all or almost all others, it is still doubted so far as he is concerned, and is easily believed to be incapable of extending to him. Often he is strongly tempted to believe, that he has committed the unpardonable sin; and often, and much, is he busied in examining what is the nature of that sin. Instead of self-flattery, the only employment which he was formerly willing to pursue, with respect to his spiritual concerns, and which he indulged in every foolish and excessive degree, he is now wholly engaged in the opposite career of self-condemnation; and not unfrequently pursues it to an excess, equally unwarranted by the Scriptures. Nor is he at all prone to feel, that he is now equally guilty of new sin in limiting the mercy of God, and in forming new kinds of unpardonable sins, as before, in presuming, without warrant, on the exercise of divine mercy towards his hardened heart.

All these emotions are also greatly heightened by the remembrance of his former stupidity, unbelief, and hardness of heart, his light-mindedness and self-justification, his deafness to instruction, his insensibility to the calls of mercy, the reproofs of guilt, and the warnings of future wo. What before were his favourite pursuits he now considers as the means of his ruin; what before was the object of his delight is now the object of his abhorrence. That which was once his support, is now his terror: that which he accounted, and boasted of, as his wisdom, he now considers as the mere madness of Bedlam. Nor can he explain to himself how such sottishness could ever have been his conduct, or his character.

The Bible, now, its threatenings and promises, its doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, assume an aspect wholly new; for the first time real, solemn, important; the only ground of his distress; and the only source of his possible comfort. The same truth and real-

ity, the same solemnity and importance, at once invest the prayers, sermons, and other religious instructions, which he has heard from his parents, from ministers, and from other persons of piety. Why they did not always, and of course, wear these characteristics, is now his astonishment; why he did not covet them, listen to them, and obey them. *Madness*, entire and dreadful, he now readily acknowledges *was in his heart* from the beginning; and has hitherto constituted his only moral character.

It is not here to be supposed, that this is, *in form*, an exact account of the state of every convinced sinner. *In substance*, it may be considered as universally just. Some such sinners are subjects of far more deep and distressing convictions, than others; convictions much longer continued; respecting some of these objects more, and others less; producing more erroneous conclusions, greater self-condemnation, deeper despondency, and, universally, more distressing agitation. Some minds are naturally more exquisitely capable of feeling, than others; more prone to sink; less prepared to hope, to exert themselves, to reason, and to admit the conclusions, which flow from reasoning; less ready to receive consolation; and more ready to yield to these, as well as other, temptations. Some have been better instructed in early life; have been more conscientious, amiable, and exemplary; and have less to reproach themselves with in their past conduct. The Spirit of God, also, may choose to affect, and probably does affect different minds in different manners. Finally; some minds may be more surrounded by temptations and dangers, and at the same time furnished with friends less accessible, counsels less wise, and directions less safe, in this season of trial and sorrow. From these and many other concurring causes it happens, that in *form*, *degree*, and *continuance*, convictions operate very differently on different minds: nor can any human skill limit them in these respects.

It ought by no means to be omitted here, that there are persons, especially of a steady, serene disposition, educated in a careful, religious manner, and habitually of unblameable lives, in whom the process of conviction is conformed in a great degree to their general character. These persons, to the time of their conversion, have, not uncommonly, no remarkable fears or hopes, sorrows or joys. Conscientiously, but calmly, they oppose sin; evenly, but mildly, they sorrow for it; and steadily, but with no great ardour of feeling, they labour in the duties of a religious life. In the account, which they give of their religious views, and emotions, there is little to excite any peculiar degree of comfort in themselves, or of hope concerning them in others. Still their lives are often distinguished by uncommon excellence. Their progress is not that of a torrent now violent, now sluggish and stagnant, but that of a river silently, and uniformly, moving onward, and never delaying its course a moment in its way towards the ocean. In these persons a critical eye may discern a fixed, unwarping love of

their duty, a perpetual repetition of good works, a continual advance towards the consummation of the Christian character.

*In substance*, however, this work is the same in all minds. All really discern the importance, reasonableness, and justice, of the divine law; their own violations of its precepts; the guilt, which they have in this manner incurred; the righteousness of God, in punishing them for it; and the extreme danger, to which they are therefore exposed. No sinner can turn from sin to holiness, without seeing the evil and danger of the one, and the excellence and safety of the other. No sinner can turn from sin to holiness, without knowing, and acknowledging, *his own sin and danger;* the reasonableness of the divine law; and the justice of God in punishing his transgressions.

III. *The immediate consequences of this conviction next demand our attention.*

On this subject it is necessary to observe in the beginning, that the sinner is still altogether a sinner. The only difference between his present and former character is, that, before, he was an *unconvinced*, and now, a *convinced*, sinner. Before, he was ignorant of his true character: now he understands it clearly.

Hence, it will be remembered, all his resolutions, efforts, and conduct, will partake of his general character; and will of course be sinful. Between his conscience and his affections, there is now a more complete and open opposition, than ever before. His conscience justifies God, approves of the divine law, and in spite of himself acquiesces in his condemnation; but his heart is still utterly opposed to all these things, and usually more opposed to them than ever.

He is, indeed, afraid to sin; but it is because he dreads the punishment annexed to it; not because he hates the sin. Nor is it an unknown, nor probably a very unfrequent, case, that these very fears become to him motives to continue in sin, and even to give himself up wholly to sinning. Under the influence of his fears, he is not unfrequently disposed to conclude, that there is no hope for him; and that, therefore, he may as well, and even better, indulge himself in wickedness, than attempt a repentance and reformation, which his deceitful heart, and probably all his spiritual enemies, represent as too late, and therefore fruitless. From this danger, some, it is not improbable, never escape; but *return, like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow, that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.* Still, I apprehend, this is very far from being a common case. A very small number only, as I believe, compared with the whole, yield themselves up to ruin in this deplorable manner. Perhaps no one, who persisted in his efforts to gain eternal life, was ever finally deserted by the Spirit of grace.

To such, as perseveringly continue in their endeavours, the next natural step in their progress, the first great consequence of conviction of sin, is to inquire most earnestly *what they shall do to be*

*saved.* Of the anguish, produced by such conviction, the text furnishes us with a very forcible example. No picture was perhaps ever more striking, than that which is given us of the extreme agitation of the Jailer, in the text. *He called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* An agitation, not unlike this, frequently occupies the hearts of others; and prompts them with the same earnestness to make the same solemn and affecting inquiry.

Antecedently to this period, the sinner has, in many instances, lived without a single sober thought of asking this question at all. *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;* has been his only language to repentance and reformation. The subject has never become seriously interesting to him before. Before, he has never seen his guilt, nor his danger. Before, he has not wished for salvation; has found good enough in the world, in sin, and in sense, to prevent all anxiety about future good; considered *this* as present and real; and regarded *that* as distant, doubtful, and imaginary. But now his danger of ruin, and his necessity of deliverance, appear in their full strength. In this situation, he makes this great inquiry with all possible solicitude. His happiness, his life, his soul, in the utmost danger of being lost for ever, are felt to be suspended on the answer. He beholds God, his own enemy, and an unchangeable enemy to sin and impenitence, now rising up to destroy him utterly, and to pour out upon him his wrath and indignation. In the deepest anguish he searches with prying eyes for a place of safety.

Here he first finds himself at a total loss concerning what he shall do. Here he first discovers his own ignorance of this great subject. Before, he was *rich, and had need of nothing;* had eyes, which *saw* clearly *all wisdom;* understood all that he needed to know, or do; and wanted no instruction nor information from others. Now he first finds himself to be, and to have been *poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things.* Now, instead of deciding on questions of the greatest moment, and difficulty, in Theology, and deciding roundly without examination, or knowledge, he is desirous of being instructed in small and plain things; and instead of feeling his former contempt for those, who are skilled in them, he becomes humble, docile, desirous of being taught, and disposed to regard with sincere respect such as are able to teach him.

At the same time, he especially betakes himself to the source of all instruction in things of this nature: *the Word of God.* This book he searches with all anxiety of mind, to find information, and hope. The threatenings and alarms, which before hindered him from reading the Scriptures, now engage him to read them. His own danger and guilt he now labours thoroughly to learn; and is impatient to know the worst of his case. Whatever he finds there

recorded, he readily admits, however painful, and employs himself no more either in doubting, or finding fault. To the former he has bidden adieu: the latter he knows to be fruitless. However guilty the Bible exhibits him, he is prepared to consider himself as being at least equally guilty. However dangerous it declares his case to be, he is prepared to acknowledge the danger.

In this distress, it will be easily supposed, he also *searches for the means of deliverance*. For these he labours with the deepest concern. Hence he reads, examines, and ponders, with an interest, new and peculiar; with fear and trembling; with critical attention to every sentiment, declaration, and word; with an earnest disposition to find relief and consolation in any and every passage, where it can be found. The Bible is now no longer the neglected, forgotten, despised book, which it formerly was; but his chief resort; *the man of his counsel; the rule of his conduct.* To him it has now become, for the first time, the word of God, and the means of eternal life.

All the difficulties, which heretofore prevented him from being present in *the house of God*, have now vanished. The disagreeable weather, the personal indispositions, the indolence which seemed like an indisposition, the plainness of the preacher, the inelegance of the sermon, and the imperfection of the psalmody, keep him at home no more. In this solemn place he listens to all that is uttered; and watches all that is done. The *preacher's words* become *as goads; piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and the Spirit, of the joints and marrow.*

At his former listlessness he is now amazed; as well as at that, which he still beholds in others around him. *The Sabbath*, no longer a dull, wearisome day, of which the hours dragged heavily, and during which he could hardly find any tolerable means of passing the time, now becomes a season of activity and industry, unceasing and intense; a season, waited for with anxiety, and welcomed with hope and joy. *The sanctuary*, no longer regarded as a place of mere confinement, as the scene of tedious, dull, unmeaning rites, where grave people were believed to assemble for scarcely any other purpose, except to keep gay ones in order, has now become *the house of* the living *God, and the Gate of Heaven;* the place, where he expects to find, if he finds at all, an escape from death, and the way to eternal life.

In the mean time, *he cries mightily unto God* for deliverance from sin and ruin. *Prayer*, long, perhaps from the beginning of his life, unused, unknown, and unthought of, or, if thought of at all, and attempted, always a burden, now becomes his most natural conduct. He sees, and feels, that God alone can deliver him; and therefore irresistibly looks to him for deliverance; oftentimes, indeed, with fear even to pray, from the strong sense which he entertains of his absolute unworthiness; and his unfitness to perform this first, most natural, most reasonable, of all religious

services. Sensible how impure an appearance he must make before that God, *in whose sight the heavens are unclean, and whose angels are charged with folly*, he feels unwilling, like *the Publican*, even *to lift up his eyes towards Heaven;* but, *smiting his* breast, cries out with importunate anguish, *God be merciful to me, a sinner!*

But he cannot be *prevented* from praying. His cries for mercy, and those at times involuntary and ejaculatory, are forced from him by the sense of his guilt, and his fears of perdition. They often break out in his walks, in the course of his daily employments, and in his occasional journeyings: they spring from his meditations; they ascend from his pillow. The question, *whether a sinner shall be directed to pray*, has become nugatory to him; and has been decided, not by metaphysical disquisition, but by the controlling anguish of his heart.

During this season of struggling for salvation, it is no unfrequent thing for his despondency to continue, to return at intervals with more weight, and to sink him deeper in distress; according to the different states of his mind, and the nature of the different subjects, which occupy his thoughts.

It is all along to be kept in view, that, as I have heretofore remarked, this state of things is very different in different persons; varying almost endlessly in manner and degree; in some instances comparatively calm, quiet, and of an even tenour; in others disturbed, distressed, and tumultuous. Still it is also to be remembered, that substantially it is the same.

During this state of mind, it is further to be observed, the sinner forsakes, of course, many of his former favourite objects; especially his diversions, his gayety, his loose companions, and his haunts of sin. These he now perceives, and feels, to be the seats, and sources, of temptation, danger, and sorrow. Hence he shuns them with vigilant care, and lively dread; not from virtuous motives, but from the fear of rendering his case more dreadful and hopeless.

But none of his efforts give him rest. Neither his affections, desires, nor labours, are virtuous in the Evangelical sense, or commendable in the sight of God. His sense of danger only, and his apprehension of the inestimable importance of escaping, originally asleep or dead; is now alive and awake. This feeling, and its necessary effects, constitute the only change in his condition. No real goodness, no moral excellence, nothing really acceptable to God, is yet begun in his mind, or supposed to be begun. To be sensible that we are sinners, is not the result of virtue. There is no real goodness in being afraid of the anger of God. There is not, necessarily, any thing holy in acknowledging, that God is just in inflicting punishment, which has been deserved. These things may all exist without any hatred of sin, and love to God, or any faith in the Redeemer.

The prayers, which he daily offers up to his Maker, are not the offspring of piety, but of terror. The Child, who sees the rod brought out to view, and beholds correction at the door, is ever ready to supplicate for pity and forgiveness, and to promise whatever may contribute to his escape from the impending danger. Yet he is not of course a dutiful child.

Still these efforts of the sinner are useful to him. No unregenerated man was probably ever convinced, except by trying his own strength, that he was unable, of himself, to perform virtuous actions; to pray, to serve, and to glorify God: unable, I mean, in this sense; that he has no heart, no inclination, to perform these duties; and that he will never possess a better disposition, but by the renovating agency of the Spirit of God. The more he labours, however, the more clearly he will perceive his services to be all essentially defective, and really sinful. The more he prays, the more unworthy he pronounces his prayers. An unconvinced sinner always believes that he can pray in a manner acceptable to God: a convinced sinner readily declares, that he cannot pray in a manner, acceptable, not to God, but even to himself.

In the struggle thus continued, and thus earnestly conducted, he learns how obstinate his sinful dispositions are, and with what hopeless difficulty they are to be overcome. Convinced at length, that all his efforts must, without the immediate assistance of God, prove entirely vain, he casts off all his dependence on himself, and turns his eye to God, with the feelings of *Peter*, when beginning to sink, and cries out in *his* language, *Lord save me, or I perish!*

## REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations we learn the use and influence of the Law of God in promoting the work of conversion.*

The Law evidently begins this work in the soul; or, perhaps, in more accurate language, it begins, and produces, that state of thought and affection, in which the Soul is usually turned to God. Without *the terrors of the Law* this state of mind would manifestly never be produced, unless the whole tenour of Divine Providence should be changed. Yet this, so far as we can see, is a natural and necessary pre-requisite to conversion. The sinner entirely needs thus to understand, and feel, his condition; his guilt, his danger, his helplessness, and his absolute necessity of being renewed by the Spirit of Grace. By the Law alone is he enabled clearly to see, and strongly to feel, these interesting things. From the same source of instruction he learns the true nature of his own efforts: for it is by a comparison of them with this standard of perfection, that he sees how destitute they are of all real holiness, and how unavailing to recommend him to God. In a word, from the Law only does he gain the knowledge, that he is spiritually *sick*, and stands in infinite need of the divine *Physician*.

2dly. *These observations also teach us the necessity, as well as usefulness, of that preaching, which explains, and enforces, the nature of the Law.*

It is not unfrequent to hear both preachers themselves, and many other persons, condemn the preaching of the Law. These persons dwell much on the endearing benevolence of the Gospel, the riches of the Divine Goodness displayed in it, and the importance, and wisdom, of winning sinners to embrace it. On the other hand, they censure with no small severity the preaching of the law, and those who, in this manner, attempt to alarm sinners concerning their moral condition. If the things, which have been said in this discourse, are admitted to be just; it must also be admitted, that these persons know very little of the important subjects, which they handle in this free and unhappy manner. They must plainly be ignorant of the nature both of the Law and the Gospel; of the sinner's danger and guilt; the means of his deliverance; the nature of both conviction and conversion; the use of convictions towards conversion; and the use of the Law in exciting them.

It has, I trust, been clearly shown, that the Law is absolutely necessary to rouse the sinner from his sleep of death, to point out to him his danger, and to induce him to seek for relief. To the necessity of the Law for this purpose, the necessity of preaching it, is exactly proportioned. Nothing else will accomplish the end. So long as this is kept out of view, other things will only sooth the sinner. If he views God as merciful without any regard to his justice, as forgiving without solid reasons: without an atonement, and without the application of that atonement to himself; he will be fearfully deceived; and trust in that mercy, on terms, and with views, agreeably to which it can never be exercised.

This method of decrying the divine Law, and the preaching of it, is a dangerous method of flattering sinners to destruction, and of *sewing pillows under all arm-holes.*

Christ, the Prophets, and the Apostles, acted in a very different manner. They stung sinners to the quick; *pricked them to the heart* with strong, solemn, and affecting representations of their guilt, their danger, and their approaching damnation; roused them from their slumbers; and forced them to listen, feel, and act.

The nature of the case shows the reasonableness, and excellency, of their example, and the propriety and wisdom of following it: while, at the same time, it holds out the folly of those who disuse, as well as those who censure, preaching of this nature. We need not be at all afraid, lest sinners in *modern* times should be more easily affected, than they were in *ancient* times. Their hearts are by no means peculiarly tender; but, like the hearts of those who lived in former days, resemble the *rock*, and need both *the fire and the hammer to break them in pieces.*

Some persons are probably afraid to preach in this manner, lest they should give pain to their hearers, and hazard their own popu-

larity. These men either destroy, or prevent, much good, by standing in the place of such preachers, as, like *Boanerges*, would thunder an alarm in the ears of sleeping guilt, and rouse the torpid soul to a sense of its danger.

3dly. *From these observations we also learn the necessity of the Gospel to the accomplishment of this great work.*

If the sinner were left wholly to the Law, he would sink, and die: for it gives him neither encouragement nor hope. While the Law is of mighty and indispensable use, to rouse him from his sloth, and awaken him to vigorous exertions for his deliverance; the Gospel is the only foundation of hope, that these exertions will be of any use. Without this hope he would do nothing, but despair. It is indispensable, therefore, that the Gospel should follow the Law in all sound preaching; that, when the sinner is roused to inquire *what he shall do to be saved*, he may find encouragement in its glorious promises and invitations. In this manner he learns, on the one hand, his ruined condition by nature and by practice, and, on the other, that safe and happy state, into which he may be introduced by the grace of God. Thus the adaptation, and utility, of the whole Word of God, to the purposes designed by it, are strongly manifest; the wisdom of all things contained in it, as the word of life; their excellency, their glory, and their resemblance to its Author. Thus, also, is it commended to our study, contemplation, wonder, and praise.

# SERMON LXXVI.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS.—GENERALLY CONSIDERED.

EPHESIANS iv. 22—24.—*That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in rightcousness and true holiness.*

IN the last discourse, I described the *situation and conduct, of a Convinced sinner.* It is now my intention to exhibit *the Conversion of the same sinner to God:* or to exhibit what in that discourse I called *the attendants of Regeneration.*

In the text, connected with the 17th verse, the *Ephesians* are commanded to *put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man;* or, in a more strict accordance with the original language, *to cast away the old, and be clothed with the new man.* It has been supposed, that the passage contains an allusion to the conduct of the new Converts, at their baptism; who are said at this ordinance to have cast away their old garments, as a symbol of their renunciation of sin, and to have been clothed with new ones, as a token of their assumption of holiness. It has also been supposed, that the Apostle alludes to the custom of Actors, who changed their clothes whenever they changed their characters. The allusion is, however, so natural and familiar, that it seems unnecessary to look far for an explanation.

*To put off the old man*, and *to put on the new man*, are, in the text, exhibited as equivalent to *being renewed in the spirit of their mind*, that is, to *being the subjects of Regeneration.* This doctrine is still further illustrated in the declarations, that the *old man is corrupt*, and *that the new man is created, after God, in righteousness and true holiness.* That to renounce the former of these characters, and to assume the latter, is the same thing with being regenerated, no person, probably, who is acquainted with this subject, will dispute.

Under these two heads, then, I shall now consider *the further progress of this Convinced Sinner;* viz.

I. *His renunciation of sin;* and,

II. *His Assumption of holiness, as his future character.*

As these co-exist in the mind, it will be unnecessary to consider them apart.

When the convinced sinner has, by a succession of earnest efforts to save himself, proved his utter inability to accomplish this important work; the next natural step, and that, which he then becomes convinced it is absolutely necessary for him to take, is to

cast himself wholly upon God. He sees himself perfectly helpless; and, if left to himself, utterly ruined. In the anguish of mind, produced by this view of his situation, he casts himself at the footstool of Divine Mercy, as a mere suppliant; as devoid of any recommendation to the favour of God; as a ruined, miserable creature; as justly condemned; as justly to be punished; as having no hope, but in mere forgiveness; as desiring salvation of mere grace and sovereign love; as without any power of atoning for his sins, by any thing which he can do; as capable of being saved, only on account of the atonement of Christ; and as incapable of renewing himself, or of being renewed, but by the power of the Holy Ghost. All these things are *felt*, and not merely *understood;* not merely considered as being proved, or capable of proof, by sound argument. The several trials, which the mind has made, have of themselves become proofs of the highest kind, to which it now opposes neither objection nor doubt. Its views have been too clear to be denied, or questioned; and the frame of the mind, its anxiety and distress, renders it even impatient of the suggestion of uncertainty.

Self-righteousness is, therefore, now relinquished. The pride of saving himself, either wholly or partially, is now given up; and the sinner is humbly, and easily, satisfied to be saved by Christ. To his atonement, to his infinite compassion, he looks for the aid, which, though felt before to be unnecessary, he now regards as absolutely and infinitely necessary to prevent him from being lost.

When the sinner has come to this state of views and disposition, God in his infinite mercy usually, perhaps always, communicates to him *the new heart*, *the right spirit*, so often mentioned in the Scriptures.

It will here be useful, and probably necessary, to guard the minds of those who hear me against a common and very natural error concerning this important subject.

It has often been supposed, that in some part, or in the whole, of that process of the mind, which has been here described, *there is something done, of a meritorious nature;* something so pleasing to God, that on account of it he bestows this incomprehensible blessing. In my own view, this opinion is wholly unscriptural, and altogether dangerous. If God gives the virtuous disposition intended, then it did not exist in the mind before it was thus given: and, as this disposition is the only source of virtuous action in the mind; it is perfectly clear, that there can be no such action before it is communicated. That God does in fact give it by his Spirit has, I trust, been heretofore proved. Antecedently to Regeneration, then, there is no virtuous action in the mind, in the true and Evangelical sense; unless we are to suppose two distinct sources of virtue, and two different kinds of virtuous action.

It will, here, be naturally asked, *What, then, is the true nature of this subject? What is the use of Conviction of sin? Why does*

*God communicate such a disposition to such sinners, as are effectually convinced of their sins, rather than to any others?*

In answer to these reasonable questions I observe, that *the use of such conviction is to bring the sinner to a just view of his own condition and character, as a sinner; of the character of God, as his Sovereign; of the divine law, as the rule of his conduct; of the character of Christ, as his Saviour; of the absolute necessity of an interest in his redemption for the attainment of salvation; and of the excellency and importance of holiness, in all its branches, as a moral character indispensable to entitle him to the favour and approbation of God.* Without these apprehensions it would be very difficult to conceive how a sinner could become the subject of those exercises, which belong to the nature of Conversion to God. For example, how can the sinner, who does not clearly see the evil, odiousness, and malignity of sin, ever be supposed to hate sin, mourn for it, or abstain from it in future periods? How, unless he discern the excellency and obligation of the law, as a rule of duty for himself, can he discern either the guilt of his transgressions, or the necessity and value of his future obedience? How, unless he be fully convinced, of the justice and glory of God in hating, and condemning sin, can he acknowledge God to be a reasonable or righteous Sovereign? And how can he ingenuously, and voluntarily, turn to him at all? Finally; if he do not perceive his own helplessness, and his insufficiency to save himself, how can he betake himself at all to Him for salvation? How, if he does not realize the fitness of Christ to be trusted with his soul, and all its concerns, as *able*, willing, and faithful, *to save to the uttermost, all that will come unto God by him*, can he believe on him, or trust in him, for these infinite blessings?

When God bestows the new disposition on the sinner, in the state above described, rather than in his ordinary state, he does this, I apprehend, not because the sinner has merited *this* blessing, or *any other*, at his hands; but because he has now become possessed of such a character, and such views, as render the communication of it fit and proper in itself. *God never extends mercy to sinners, because of their desert, or worth, but because they need his mercy.* When he sent his Son into the world, to save the Apostate race of *Adam*, it was not because these apostates had merited, but because they needed, such kindness at his hands. It was a mere act of grace; or free, sovereign love. The communication of it was not a reward, conferred on worth; for they plainly had none; but a free gift to mere necessity and distress. Christ *came, to seek and to save that which was lost;* and *to call, not righteous beings, but sinners to repentance. The Father*, in the parable, did not admit *the Prodigal* into his family and favour, on account of any services which he had rendered; for he had rendered none; but on account of the misery and ruin of his Son, pleading strongly with his own compassion. Such I conceive to

be the case of every convinced sinner, when he is made the subject of the renewing grace of God.

But there is a plain reason, why such sinners are made the objects of divine mercy, when they have arrived at a complete view of their guilt, danger, and dependence on God for sanctification and deliverance, rather than while they were at ease in sin, and self-justified in their rebellion. In the latter situation, they were utterly unprepared either to feel, or understand, the nature and extent of the divine goodness in bestowing these blessings; and of course to be thankful, obedient, humble, and universally virtuous, to that degree, which is necessary to their effectual preparation for heaven, and which seems incapable of being accomplished in any other manner, than this, which I have described. A deliverance is both understood, and felt, in proportion to the greatness of the sense, which the person delivered has had, of his danger. A new moral character is welcomed, in proportion to the feelings which have been experienced in the debasement, and disadvantages, of the character previously existing. Universally, every benefit is realized, in proportion to the sense of our own necessity. Thus by the sense of his guilt, danger, and need of salvation, experienced under the conviction of his sin, the sinner is prepared with the utmost advantage to receive his sanctification, justification, and final deliverance from eternal ruin. *This is what I call the fitness of the sinner for the reception of these benefits:* a fitness, which seems indispensable; appearing, plainly, to render it proper, that God should give these blessings to a convinced sinner; when it would be wholly improper to give them to the same sinner, while unconvinced and insensible. Benefits are wisely conferred on those who are fitted thoroughly to understand, feel, and acknowledge them; and unwisely on those who are not; whose views are obscure, whose feelings are blunt, and whose acknowledgments, if made at all, are wrung from them by the hard hand of necessity. In the former case, the benefits may be said to be laid out well; in the latter, to little or no purpose.

These observations may possibly throw some light on a subject, which, hitherto, has been almost merely a topic of debate among theologians. This is, *the true nature, and efficacy, of the prayers of such persons as are under conviction of sin.* Some divines have strongly encouraged, and others utterly discouraged, convinced sinners from praying. Those of the latter class, founding their opinions on the declaration, that *the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord*, observe, that the prayers of convinced sinners cannot be acceptable to God; that they cannot reasonably be expected to be either heard, or answered: and that, therefore, it is unjustifiable to advise such sinners, or any sinners whatever, to pray at all.

This subject will hereafter naturally offer itself for discussion. I shall now consider it only so far as my present purpose demands.

According to the opinion, which I have recited, no man can, with any propriety, pray for his regeneration. The sinner cannot pray for it, because his prayers are sinful and abominable. The saint cannot pray for it, with propriety, because he is already regenerated, and cannot possibly either need, or receive, it. Thus the greatest blessing ever given to man, and that on which all other blessings depend, cannot be prayed for by him who receives it; and stands, therefore, on a ground totally diverse from that, on which all other blessings rest; viz. on such a ground, that a man can never ask it for himself.

*The prayers of convinced sinners*, it is said, *are insincere, and therefore abominable to God.* In answer to this objection I observe, that a sinner, whether convinced or not, may undoubtedly pray with insincerity, in all instances; but there is no invincible necessity, that his prayers should always be insincere, notwithstanding he is a sinner. A sinner may, from a sense of his danger and misery, pray as sincerely to be saved from that danger and misery, as a saint. His disposition, I acknowledge, is still sinful; and his prayers are wholly destitute of moral goodness. But the mere wish to be saved from suffering, is neither sinful nor holy. On the contrary, it is merely the instinctive desire of every percipient being; without which he would cease to be a percipient being. That there is any thing hateful to God in this wish, whether expressed in prayer, or not, I cannot perceive; nor do I find it declared, either by Reason or Revelation. It may, indeed, be united with other desires, and those either virtuous or sinful; according to the prevailing character of the mind, in which it exists; and the whole state of the mind may be accordingly denominated virtuous, or sinful. Still this desire is neither morally good, nor morally evil; and, therefore, neither pleasing, nor displeasing, as such, in the sight of God.

That God pities sinners, as mere sufferers, will not be doubted: otherwise he would not have sent his Son, to redeem them from sin, and misery. That he pities them more, when strongly affected with a sense of their guilt, and misery, than when at ease concerning both, will, I think, be readily believed. The sinner is certainly not less an object of compassion, but much more, when feeling the evils, in which he is involved; and I can see no reason, why he may not be more an object of divine compassion, on that account, as well as of ours. The cries of the sinner for mercy are not, therefore, in themselves sinful; and there is nothing to make the sinner less, but much, apparently, to make him more, an object of the divine pity.

As the sinner knows, that *regeneration is the only possible mean of escape, and safety;* so he may, and plainly will, feel, in the same degree, the necessity of *regeneration* to him, as of *safety.* For regeneration, then, he will cry with the same ardour, and the same

freedom from sinfulness in this prayer, considered by itself, as for salvation, or deliverance from suffering.

That the prayers of unregenerate men are not virtuous, must undoubtedly be admitted: for nothing can be virtuous, which does not proceed from a heart, good in the Evangelical sense. That they are sinful, so far as they are of a moral nature, must also be admitted, at least by me. The declaration of *Solomon*, that *the prayers of the wicked are an abomination*, appears to me, together with others of the like import, to be *a description of the prayers of wicked men, as they are in their general nature; and not as the mere cries of a suffering creature for mercy.* In these, considered by themselves, I see nothing of a sinful nature. *They are not indeed objects of the divine Complacency;* and the sinner, who offers them, is clearly an object of the divine anger. But I see no evidence, that *the prayers of such a sinner may not be objects of the divine Benevolence*, and regarded by the Infinite Mind with compassion. *To that compassion only are they addressed.* The cries of a profligate vagrant in distress render him more properly, and more intensely, an object of compassion, and more especially entitled to relief, although he is still profligate, from a good man, than he would be, were he to continue insensible and hardened under his sufferings, and thus utterly unfitted to have any proper views of his need of relief, or the kindness of his benefactor in furnishing it. I see no reason, why God may not regard suffering sinners in a similar manner. That he does, in fact, thus regard them, is, I think, unanswerably evident: Regeneration regularly following such prayers, and being regularly communicated to the subjects of them, in the course of God's Providence, whenever it exists at all. That this is ordinarily, nay, that it is almost always, the fact, cannot, I think, be questioned. All sinners under conviction pray; and of such sinners all converts are made. To convinced sinners, crying to God for mercy, Regeneration is communicated by the Spirit of God; and we are not, I think, warranted to conclude, that it is given to any others. As, then, the whole number of regenerated persons is formed of those, who have been convinced of sin, and who have been diligently employed in prayer, while under conviction; it is plain, that their prayers are not abominable, in such a sense, as to prevent the blessing, prayed for, from descending upon them; and therefore, not in such a sense, as rationally to discourage them from praying.

*The prayer of the Publican* is, in my view, a clear and strong illustration of the justness of these remarks. There is no proof, nor in my opinion any reason to believe, that this man was regenerated. On the contrary, he declares himself, in his prayer to God, to be a sinner. As this declaration is put into his mouth by our Saviour; it must, I think, be considered not only as a sincere declaration, but a correct one; expressing with exactness the precise truth. He was, also, a convinced sinner; as is evident from

his own words, and from the whole tenour of the parable. Yet *he was justified rather than the Pharisee.* The *Pharisee* came before God with a false account of himself; with a lofty spirit of self-righteousness; and with an unwarrantable contempt for other men; particularly for the publican. The *Publican* came with a strong and full conviction of his sin, and his supreme need of deliverance. With these views, confessing himself to be a sinner merely, he earnestly besought God to have mercy on him. His sense of his character was plainly just; and his prayer, being the result of his feelings, was of course sincere. Thus far I consider him as justified, and no farther. If he was regenerated in consequence of his prayer, and justified in the Evangelical sense; the parable becomes completely decisive to my purpose; and furnishes all the encouragement to convinced sinners to pray, which can be asked. But this I will not at present insist on; because it is not expressly declared; although, in my own view, it is fairly and rationally inferred from the strain of the parable.

These observations I have made of the present time, because the subject could scarcely fail of occurring to your minds; and because difficulties could scarcely fail of attending it, in the view of some persons at least, which it must be desirable to remove. Allow me, however, to observe, that divines, so far as I may be permitted to judge, have insisted on the metaphysical nature of this and several other subjects in such a manner, as rather to perplex, than to instruct, those who have heard them. To unfold, or to limit, exactly, the agency of moral beings, seems to be a task, imperfectly suited to such minds as ours. What the *Scriptures* have said concerning this subject we know; so far as we understand their meaning. We also know whatever is clearly taught us by *Experience.* Beyond this our investigations seem not to have proceeded very far: and almost all the conclusions, derived from reasonings *a priori*, have failed of satisfying minds, not originally biassed in their favour.

From this digression, which I hope has not been wholly without use, I now return to the general subject.

When the sinner has come to this state of discernment and feeling, in which his character, danger, and necessity of deliverance, are thus realized; and has thus cast himself, as a mere suppliant for mercy, at the footstool of divine grace, God, as has been already observed, gives him a new and virtuous disposition; styled in the Scriptures *a new heart; a right spirit; an honest and good heart; the good treasure of a good heart;* and by several other names, of like import. That Act of the Spirit of God, by which this disposition is communicated; that is, the act of regenerating man, and the Disposition itself which is communicated, I cannot be expected to describe. Neither of these things can in the abstract, be known, or even contemplated, by such minds as ours. Not a single idea would ever be formed concerning the nature, or existence, of

either, were they not discovered by *their effects;* or, as they are called in the Gospel, *their fruits.* It may, however, be useful to repeat, that what I intend by this disposition is *the cause, which in the mind of man produces all virtuous affections and volitions; the state, in which the mind is universally possessed of a tendency to the Evangelical character, or the tendency, itself, of the mind towards all that, which in the character is morally excellent.* The existence of this disposition is proved by its effects; and in these only can it be seen. As these are new, and before unknown; it follows irresistibly, that the cause is equally new. This is, also, abundantly taught by the Scriptures; in which the disposition itself is called *a new heart;* the man, who becomes a subject of it, *a new creature;* and the life, proceeding from it, *newness of life.*

*The first great effect of this disposition is the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* The convinced sinner, as I have repeatedly observed, deeply feels his own utter inability to atone for his sins; to satisfy the demands of the divine law; and to reconcile himself to God.

All this, however, Christ informs him in the Gospel, he is able, willing, and faithful to do for him. In this situation, the sinner, for the first time, confides in these declarations of the Redeemer; and in that Moral Character, which furnishes the evidence of their truth. The scheme of saving himself, either wholly or partially, he has now given up; and is satisfied, and delighted, to be saved by Christ alone. His self-righteousness, so dear and delightful to him before, he now discerns to be nothing, but gross spiritual pride; and so far from being praiseworthy, as to be the foundation of nothing, but guilt, and shame. Now he quits all designs of exalting, and gratifying, himself in this work; and becomes highly pleased with exalting Christ by cheerfully rendering to him all the honour of his salvation. With these emotions, he receives Christ with all the heart; and confides in *Him* for acceptance with God, as the only, and at the same time the most desirable, Atonement for sin. Now, if he *could* save himself, he would not choose to be thus saved; but sees a beauty and glory in the salvation of sinners by Christ, with which his heart wholly accords, and with which his soul is exceedingly delighted. He surrenders himself, therefore, into the hands of this divine Redeemer, confidentially, to be his here and for ever; to be governed by his choice, and to do all his pleasure.

The next effect of this disposition is that, which in the Scriptures is called *Repentance unto life;* and in theological discourses, *Evangelical Repentance.*

It has been already observed, that the convinced sinner is, of course, deeply affected with a realizing sense of his sins, as being guilty, deserving the wrath of God, and the sources of ruin to himself. After he is regenerated, he, for the first time, begins to hate his sins, as odious in their very nature; as injurious to God, his

fellow-creatures, and himself; and to loathe himself, as a sinner. Now, for the first time, he begins to feel, that he has been an ungrateful, impious, and rebellious wretch; opposed in heart, and life, to the government of his Maker; a nuisance to his fellow-creatures; and an enemy to himself. His character he perceives to be deeply debased; and himself to be *unworthy of the least of all the mercies* bestowed on him by his divine Benefactor. With all this is also united a strong sense of the odiousness, and danger, of every future sin; a sense, which is continued through life.

All these things, also, he spontaneously, and ingenuously confesses before God. Him he has injured above all other beings; and to him he wishes, especially, to make whatever satisfaction is in his power. Willingly, therefore, he humbles himself before his Maker in dust and ashes; and henceforth assumes lowliness of mind, as his own most becoming and favourite character.

The disobedience, which he thus hates and loathes, he necessarily wishes, and *labours to avoid.* The obedience, which he heretofore loathed, he spontaneously assumes, in a manner not less necessary, as his own future character. Unwilling now to wound himself, to injure his fellow-men, and to dishonour God, by the indulgence of his former guilty inclinations, he resolves, henceforth, to do that, and that only, which will glorify his Maker, promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures, and profit his own soul. To this great work, the end of all others, he consecrates himself with sincerity, zeal, and fixed determination.

*The next fruit of this disposition is Love to God.* When the soul is regenerated, it begins to behold its Maker's character with new optics; and therefore perceives the character itself to be new, so far as its own views are concerned. It is now seen to be formed of such attributes, as wholly deserve, and most reasonably claim, the supreme love of every intelligent being. God becomes to the renewed man, a welcome object of his daily thoughts and meditations: an object, great and awful indeed; but also lovely and delightful. These two great parts of the divine character, being generally united in the view of the mind, produce in it *that regard to God, compounded of fear and love, which is commonly named Reverence;* the affection, in which love is more frequently exercised, than by itself. In the same mind also, the sight of his wonderful works, and more wonderful agency, produces *Admiration;* a sense of his excellence, *Complacency;* and the reception of his blessings, *Gratitude;* and with these are inseparably united all the other affections of piety; *Dependence, Confidence, Resignation, Hope,* and *Joy.* Of these, some prevail at one time, and some at another; but all are inwrought into the very character of the soul, as primary parts of its moral nature.

*These three exercises constitute what in the Scriptures is called Conversion, or turning from sin to God.*

*The next fruit of this disposition is Love to Mankind. Evangel-*

*ical Love to our Neighbour;* that is, to all mankind, whether friends or enemies, is a characteristic of the renewed mind, as really new, and really unexperienced before its renovation, as *Repentance* or *Faith.* Whatever love it exercised to others, antecedently to this period, was either selfish or merely instinctive; in the former case sinful; in the latter possessed of no moral character, any more than the affection of brutes to their offspring. Now, the love, which it exercises, is impartial, generous, and noble. Under its influence, the renewed man does that which is good, just, and sincere, because it is so; and because God has required these things in his law; and not from a regard to reputation, or convenience. Now he finds the promotion of happiness to be desirable and delightful in itself, and independently of a separate reward, to be done for its own sake, and not merely as it is done by publicans and sinners. The great question now becomes how, when, and where, good can be done; and not what he shall gain by doing it. Now, also, he chooses to do good by rule, and from a spirit of obedience to the rightful Lawgiver, and all-wise Director; and thus makes it the purpose of his life. Now finally, he does good conscientiously, with contrivance and design; not accidentally, loosely, and rarely. *Towards Christians this love assumes a peculiar character; being made up of two great and distinguished exercises; the general Benevolence, exercised toward them in common with all men, and that peculiar delight in their virtuous character,* commonly called *Complacency,* and in the Gospel, *Brotherly Love.* This is the object of the *New Commandment,* given by Christ in the Gospel; and made the touchstone, by which they are proved to be his disciples.

Of all these exercises of the mind it is to be observed, that they are *active exertions,* directed invariably, and alway, toward the promotion of real good; the spring of all excellent conduct within, and without, the soul. It is not to be understood, that *they exist, and act, in such a separate manner* as to be distinguishable, as to the times, and modes, of their existence, or operations; nor that they actually take place in *that order, in which they have now been mentioned.* Of this subject the Scriptures give us no distinct account; and happily, as indeed, might fairly be concluded from their silence, it is of no serious importance to *us.* All, which is really necessary, is, that they exist, and increase, in such a manner, as is best in the sight of God.

As the regenerated man discerns his own unceasing need of divine assistance, and his general propensity to stop, and backslide, in his religious course; *he will necessarily, and instinctively, look to God, for assistance, strength, and success. Prayer* will be the breath, by which he will live, and grow, and thrive. The closet, the family, and the Church, will alternately be the scenes of his public and private devotions; the places where he will find hope, and peace, and joy; and where he will advance in all Evangelical

attainments. *To the Scriptures*, also, will he betake himself for the same aid. In them he finds God speaking to him; and declaring the very things, which are necessary to enlighten his understanding, and to amend his heart. To the Scriptures, therefore, he will continually resort; and will make them the object of his investigation, and reflection, at all convenient seasons. *Nor will he be less employed in exploring the recesses of his own heart;* that he may learn, as far as may be, the moral state of his mind; his sins and dangers, the improvements which he has made in holiness, and the means of future safety.

In the like manner will the renewed Mind *solicit, and lay hold on the company, conversation, and friendship, of good men.* Their views of the Scriptures, of the danger of sin and temptation, and of the excellency and safety of holiness; their own affections and conduct; their example and prayers; their sympathy, communion, and encouragement; will prove ever-flowing springs of spiritual life and consolation. These are its own companions in the path of life; the disciples of its own Saviour; the children of its own heavenly Father. All its interests are theirs. One common cause unites, one common family embraces, one common spirit quickens, and one God, the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of all, loves, purifies, conducts, supports, and brings to his own house, both the regenerated man, and his fellow-christians. In them, therefore, he finds an interest, a friendship, a kindred character of soul, which binds him to them with an indissoluble attachment. With peculiar satisfaction he enjoys their company here; and with delightful hope anticipates their endless society hereafter.

Thus have I endeavoured summarily to explain *the Work of Regeneration;* and to describe *those immediate fruits of it*, by means of which alone it is discernible by man. As these apparently coexist with the work itself; I have, in general language, called them, *its Attendants.* The name, I confess, is not metaphysically exact; nor will I insist on the entire propriety of adopting it. Yet as it naturally coincides with the views, formed on this subject by the mind in which it exists, it seems sufficiently descriptive of what was intended, for my purpose.

# SERMON LXXVII.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS.—FAITH.—REPENTANCE.

MATTHEW xxvii. 3—5.—*Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders; Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? see thou to that; And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

IN my last discourse, I gave an account of the work of Regeneration; and, particularly, of its immediate effects on the mind; which, because they apparently co-exist with it, I styled its Attendants. Of these, I particularly mentioned Faith in Christ, Repentance, Love to God, and Love to mankind. All these exercises of the renewed mind are of such importance in the Scriptural scheme, as to demand a distinct and particular consideration.

Faith, the first of them in the order which I have adopted, has heretofore been largely examined. In so complex a science, as that of Theology, it is impossible not to anticipate particular subjects of discourse; because among several things which are collateral and not regularly successive, and which are also variously connected, it becomes almost necessary to select, for reasons irresistibly occurring, some one out of the several connexions, which will prove in a measure injurious to the consideration of others. On some accounts, the natural order would have induced me to discuss the subject of Faith in this place; on others, it seemed desirable to give it an earlier examination. As the mind can very easily transfer it to that period, at which, in the order of time, it begins to exist; the disadvantage will be immaterial, should it upon the whole be thought a disadvantage.

The next subject of consideration is Repentance unto life; usually called Evangelical Repentance.

In the text we are informed, that *Judas*, after he had betrayed Christ, seeing that he was condemned, *repented himself.* It is therefore certain, that *Judas* was in some sense a penitent; yet it is equally certain, that his repentance was not genuine; or, in other words, was not the repentance, which is required by the Gospel. As one of the most useful methods of distinguishing that which is genuine, from that which is spurious, is to compare them; I shall, in the discussion of this subject,

I. *Examine the repentance of Judas;* and,

II. *The Nature of True Repentance.*

Concerning the Repentance of *Judas*, I observe,

1st. *That it was real.*

That *Judas* actually felt, and did in no sense counterfeit, the sorrow, which he professed, for his treachery, and its consequences, is evident beyond a possible doubt: its existence being evinced by the highest of all proofs; its influence on his conduct. False Repentance, therefore, by which I mean all that which is not Evangelical, has a real, and not merely a pretended, existence. Of course, it is not, in this respect, at all distinguished from the Repentance of the Gospel.

2dly. *It was deep and distressing.*

This, also, is equally evinced in the same manner. No person, who was present to hear what *Judas* said, and to see the things which he did, could entertain a doubt, that he was exceedingly distressed by the remembrance of what he had done. False Repentance may not only be real, but deeply distressing; and cannot by this circumstance be distinguished from that which is genuine.

3dly. *It was attended by a strong and full conviction of his guilt.*

This is, also, amply declared, both in his words, and in his actions; so as not to admit even of a question. False Repentance, therefore, cannot be distinguished from the true by this circumstance.

4thly. *It was followed by a frank confession of his guilt. I have sinned*, said this miserable man, *in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*

This confession he made before those, to whom we should naturally expect him last to make it; viz. the very persons, who had hired him to sin. It was also a confession, extorted from him by a sense of his guilt alone, and not by any human persuasion, art, or violence. It was sincere: being not only really, but intentionally, true: a frank declaration both of his views, and of his conduct. Such a confession is, therefore, no decisive proof, that Repentance is genuine.

5thly. *It was also followed, so far as was now possible, by a departure from his former conduct.*

Whatever motives, of a different kind, prompted *Judas* to his treachery, it is plain, Covetousness had his share of influence. The attainment of money, he himself informs us, was an object, primarily in his view. *What will ye give me*, said he to the chief priests; *and I will deliver him unto you.* The sum, which they offered, was indeed very small: still, it plainly operated with commanding force upon his mind. Nor need we wonder, that he, who, when he kept the bag, which contained the little means of subsistence, on which, when not supported by hospitality, Christ and his Apostles lived, could from time to time basely plunder so small a part of it, as not to be detected by his companions, should be induced to undertake a very base employment for thirty pieces of silver. But on the present occasion, covetous as he habitually was

at all former times, he voluntarily returned the money, which he had received, to the chief priests; and, in the anguish of his heart, overcame, for a season, this ruling propensity. Beyond this, he was desirous to do justice to the character of Christ. *I have sinned*, said he, *in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*

6thly. *It was followed by the voluntary infliction of great evils upon himself.*

Beside the voluntary surrender of the money, which, if we may judge from what the attainment of it cost him, must have been given up with great difficulty, he went immediately away, and put a violent end to his own life: thus choosing to encounter the greatest evil, which can be suffered in the present life, rather than endure the anguish of heart, produced by the dreadful sin, of which he had been guilty in betraying his Lord.

From this melancholy fact it is clearly evident, that no voluntary penance furnishes the least proof, that the repentance, which occasioned it, was genuine. *We may give all our goods to feed the poor;* nay, *we may give our bodies to be burned;* and yet it may *profit us nothing.*

From these observations it is unanswerably evident, that a false Repentance may wear many appearances of the true; that it may in many respects be followed by the same, or similar, conduct; and that it may, on the whole, go very far in its resemblance; and still not be Evangelical.

In other circumstances, the false penitent may exhibit, still further, such resemblances in his character. Thus *Saul*, when he pursued *David* to the cave of *Engedi;* and *David*, by cutting off the skirt of his robe while he slept, had proved to him, that he had spared his life, when it was in his power to have killed him; was strongly affected by a sense of *David's* superior righteousness, and benevolence; and exhibited a deep conviction of his own inhumanity, and injustice. Nor was he, in a small degree, grateful to *David* for preserving his life, when so entirely in *David's* power. In the indulgence of this emotion, he prayed, and so far as we can judge, wished, for a blessing upon *David.* From this example it is evident, that, under clear and strong views of sin, persons may exercise a species of Repentance, in which all these emotions shall exist together with all the conduct, naturally springing from them; and yet their repentance not be that of the Gospel.

In proportion as any counterfeit approximates towards that, which it is designed to resemble, is the importance of the discrimination, by which its real nature is to be distinguished. Since False Repentance, therefore, can in so many particulars approach towards the true; it is indispensably necessary to examine them both, in such a manner, as to acquire distinct apprehensions concerning their different natures. To complete this design, I now proceed,

II. *To examine the nature of True Repentance.*

Of this important Evangelical subject, it may be observed, that it includes,

1st. *Just views of Sin.*

*Fools*, or wicked men, *make a mock at sin;* that is, they regard it as a thing, destitute of any real importance; as a trifle, about which they have no reason to be seriously concerned; as an object of sport and diversion, rather than of solemn, or even of sober, thought. To these views of sin the convinced sinner, so long as his convictions continue, has bidden a final farewell. To his eye sin appears as a great and terrible evil, fraught with consequences of the most dreadful nature. But even *his* views are principally generated by an alarming sense of its dangerous consequences, rather than by any just emotions arising from its nature. The views, formed by the penitent, differ from both these. While he realizes all the apprehensions of the convinced sinner, he adds to them, also, a new and peculiar sense of the importance of sin, *as an evil in itself.* To him it appears as a great evil, primarily, *as it respects God.* The character of God is, in his view, so great and so good, and his commands are so reasonable, that obedience to him appears supremely excellent and desirable, and disobedience supremely undesirable and unworthy. Both are estimated by his eye with a steady reference to the glorious character of the Creator; the excellence and importance of the law, by which he governs the universe; the auspicious efficacy of obedience to it; and the malignant influence of disobedience on the character and happiness of intelligent beings. Wherever God is concerned, all regard to creatures must be secondary, and comparatively unimportant. But, when we consider the number of intelligent creatures; the dignified nature of their faculties; the importance of their actions in producing happiness or misery; and their capacity of enjoying happiness, or suffering misery, throughout eternity; their combined interests become an object, to a created eye, literally immense. The interest of one immortal mind, and the virtue of that mind, living and operating throughout endless ages, severally transcend all finite estimation. Of this virtue, and these interests, sin is the absolute destruction. It will, therefore, necessarily seem to the penitent an evil, which cannot be measured.

As his own interests and virtue are concerned, he will feel this subject in a peculiar manner. These he naturally realizes in a stronger degree, than he can realize the same things, as belonging to others. Particularly, he will be deeply affected by a consciousness of that debasement, which sin had produced in his character. He will feel himself brought low; degraded beneath the proper level of a rational being; lost to all useful and honourable purposes; and active only to such, as are unworthy and mischievous. Of course, he regards himself as having been a nuisance to the universe; and therefore justly loathsome in the sight of God, and

contemptible in that of all virtuous beings. Of necessity, therefore, he will be odious and contemptible in his own sight.

To atone for an evil of such vast moment will appear to him utterly beyond his power. It will seem plainly impossible to him to repair, in any manner, the injury which he has done to God; the dishonour, which he has cast upon his law; and the injustice, which he has been guilty of to the universe. That this should be done will appear to him indispensable, in order to his acceptance with God. The condescension of God, therefore, in providing, and the benevolence of Christ in accomplishing, such an atonement, will seem to him vast, wonderful, and eminently divine.

2dly. *True Repentance involves in it Hatred of sin.*

Under the influence of Conviction, every sinner hates sin, in this sense; that he regards it as the cause of future punishment; that is, he dreads the suffering, and hates the cause of it, as such; and under the influence of this feeling he will usually abstain from many, perhaps most, overt acts of transgression. But the penitent hates sin in its very nature. He does not merely dread the punishment, but the sin, independently of the punishment: so that, were there no punishment to follow, he would still carefully avoid the sin. *In its own nature it is loathsome to his taste:* just as certain kinds of food are disgusting to a particular taste; and are avoided, not because they are supposed to be injurious to the health, but merely because they are disgusting.

It ought, perhaps, here to be observed, to prevent perplexity in the minds of those who hear me, that I do not intend to represent the penitent *as hating or loathing those kinds of enjoyment*, which in their nature may be lawful, and are sinful only by some attendant circumstances, with which they are at times enjoyed; nor to represent him *as hating the objects*, whence such enjoyment is derived. Objects, of this kind, and the enjoyments springing from them, are made agreeable to our nature by the Creator himself; are equally pleasing to the penitent and impenitent; and are in themselves lawful, when existing in the proper degrees, and in the proper circumstances. Food and wine are both means of pleasure, which may be lawfully enjoyed; but they are also the means of gluttony and drunkenness. The penitent hates the gluttony and drunkenness; but he does not, therefore, hate the food and the wine; nor the pleasure which they communicate, when lawfully enjoyed. Nor has God required this at his hands. If, indeed, he has found them to be dangerous to him, as temptations to inordinate and sinful indulgence; he will dread, and watch, and, as the case may be, shun them on this account. Yet the pleasure, which they communicate when lawfully enjoyed, neither is, nor is required to be, the object of his hatred. *The sin*, committed in an inordinate, or otherwise unlawful, use of the object, will be hated by the penitent; and not *the object itself.*

I have mentioned, under the preceding head, that sin will be viewed by the penitent as being primarily evil, because it is an injury done to God. *This consideration will peculiarly awaken his hatred of sin.* An injury done to a being so great and glorious, will appear to him pre-eminently unreasonable and ill-deserving. He will remember with peculiar solemnity, and lively affection, that this glorious Being has forbidden sin in every form and degree; and that every transgression is, therefore, an open, as well as causeless, affront to his infinite authority. Nor will he fail to recollect, that the same exalted Being is his own supreme Benefactor; and that every blessing, which he has received, has *come down from the Father of lights.* With this great consideration in view, he will be deeply pained by a sense of the ingratitude, exercised toward his Creator in every transgression.

Nor will he be less deeply affected, when he remembers, that sin alone occasioned all the sufferings of the Redeemer. That so glorious and excellent a person, as Christ, should suffer at all, and especially in so dreadful a manner, every penitent will feel to be of all things the most undesirable, and the most to be regretted. How evil, then, in its nature, must be the cause of these sufferings; and how distressing to know, that in this evil his own sins have their share!

Besides, all his own sins have been committed in a full view of these sufferings, with an ample knowledge of their greatness, and intensity, together with a complete discovery of Christ's excellence in consenting thus to suffer, and amid the very sound of those offers of mercy, which Christ proclaimed through the agonies of the cross. By these considerations the penitent will feel his own unworthiness, particularly his ingratitude, mightly enhanced; and will *abhor himself, repenting in dust and ashes.*

Nor will the mischiefs, occasioned by sin to his fellow creatures, fail to increase, mightily, his hatred of this dreadful evil. All the sufferings, found throughout this great world, will be easily seen by him to have sprung from this cause only; and a great part of them to be its immediate effects. These, being its proper fruits, exhibit in the clearest and most forcible manner the nature of the tree. In deceit, fraud, contention, cruelty, oppression, and bloodshed, he will see portrayed in living colours the detestable nature of the spirit, which gives them birth. But this is not all. A much more important consideration will every where present itself to his view; and much more powerfully affect his heart. All his fellow-men are immortal; and are capable of endless happiness, or endless suffering. Nay, it will be the actual lot of every one of them to be happy, or miserable, for ever. Viewed in this light, their interests become infinitely valuable. Sin, the cause of all their future, as well as present, misery, is thus invested with an importance, which to the eye of the penitent becomes literally immense. With deep concern and amazement he will behold a vast multitude of rational

beings, *bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh*, corrupted by this moral pollution in such a manner, as to render them incapable of happiness; and to such a degree, as to render it wholly improper for God to make them happy. Beyond this, he will see them not only cast off for ever by God, as wholly unfit to be members of the kingdom of happiness, and made objects of his wrath and indignation; but finally ruined, and made for ever wretched, by the proper influence of the sin itself. The same malignant efficacy, with which it produces the sufferings of the present world, will produce similar sufferings in every other world, where it predominates; greater, always, in proportion to the degree in which it prevails. In the world of perdition, therefore, being unmingled and perfect, it will produce finished ruin to all its wretched inhabitants. With these views of this mighty evil, he will behold it with the deepest loathing and abhorrence. With these views he will regard that example, which may tempt others to sin; those arguments, which may perplex or bewilder them; those doctrines, which may encourage or quiet them in disobedience; and, generally, all those motives, which may slacken their course in the path of virtue, or quicken their progress in iniquity, only with alarm and horror. Necessarily, therefore, will he refuse to become the instrument of setting these snares for the feet of his fellow-men, and of digging the pit of destruction in their way. Anxiously will he watch, and strive, and pray, that he may not become the means of leading immortal minds to final ruin.

Nor will he fail to be deeply affected with *the evils, done by sin to himself.* This part of the subject he will be able to understand more clearly, and to realize more strongly, than perhaps any other. The debasement of his nature as a rational being, mentioned under the former head, will seem to him an evil of no secondary magnitude. The complete perversion of his noble faculties, the frustration of the end of his existence, the continual inroads made upon his peace, the prevention of his usefulness, together with his exposure to final perdition, all accomplished by this malignant cause, render it necessarily, and supremely, detestable in his sight.

At the same time, *this hatred will be directed towards sin of every kind.* The same odious nature is inherent in sins, whatever form they may assume, and in whatever manner they may exist; whether they are secret or open; whether they exist in thought, word, or action; whether they immediately respect God or man, his fellow-men or himself; whether they are reputable or disreputable; whether productive of gain or followed by loss. In every one of these forms they have still the same evil, shameful, odious character; and will, therefore, universally awaken his hatred.

Finally; *he will hate sin in all persons;* in himself, his family, his friends, his fellow-christians, his countrymen, and mankind. The only difference, here, will be: the nearer it comes home to

him, he will hate it the more. In his friends and fellow-christians, therefore, his family and himself, he will hate it more than in others; especially, as the expressions of his hatred towards *their* sins, and his opposition to *his own*, may have a peculiar efficacy in preventing future transgressions. Nor will the kindred, or amableness, of any person, prevent him from regarding his sins with disgust and abhorrence.

3dly. *True Repentance involves in it a sincere Sorrow for sin.*

A dutiful child, who has disobeyed his father, feels, after all the fears of punishment are over, sincere regret, because he has disobeyed. A good man, when he has done an injury to a friend, even when the fact is unknown, and himself is secure from possible detection, laments secretly his unworthy conduct. A penitent feels a similar regret, that he has offended God, and injured his fellowmen; not from the apprehension of their resentment, or of the anger of God, merely; but also from the sense of the evil which he has done; from a realizing view of the unworthiness of which he has been guilty. With this view, he will be ever ready to cry out, with *St. Paul*, *O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

4thly. *True Repentance will prompt the subject of it freely to confess his sins before God.*

Confession is the first, the proper, the natural, language of Repentance. In this manner *Job* confessed, when God, appearing to him with divine glory, discovered to him the corruption of his heart, and the guiltiness of his life. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* In the same manner *David*, also, confessed: *I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before thee.* Thus, also, *Nehemiah and his companions*, the captives who had returned from *Babylon*, spent *one fourth part* of the day of their public humiliation in confessing their sins; and said: *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right; but we have done wickedly.* Thus the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* are extensively occupied in this employment. Thus *Daniel*, in strong terms, declared to God the sins of himself and his people. Thus, finally, have all sincere penitents done in every age, and in every country. The heart, in the clear view of its sins, in the strong apprehension of the wrongs, which it has done to God, and to mankind, is full, and overflows; and *out of its abundance the mouth* is compelled to *speak*. Besides, confession is the first attempt towards making amends for the injury; and the penitent is ready to adopt every measure, which may, in his view, contribute to the accomplishment of an end, believed to be so important, and relished as so desirable.

5thly. *True Repentance is followed by Reformation.*

Every penitent will, like *Elihu*, pronounce concerning himself, as well as concerning others: *Surely it is meet to be said unto God,*

*I have borne chastisement: I will not offend any more. That, which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

Amendment is the End of all Repentance: and this involves the two-fold office of *forsaking sin*, and *practising holiness*. It will easily be believed, that he who hates and mourns for his sins, must, under the influence of this disposition, regard the future commission of them with dread, and proceed to it only under the influence of frailty, the occasional predominance of lust, or the powerful influence of external temptations. To forsake it will also be believed to be a commanding object of his designs, and efforts. With this object is intimately connected a fixed, and universal, determination faithfully to practise future Obedience. This is the sum of the divine pleasure concerning his remaining life; the substance of all the precepts, contained in the law of that glorious Being, to have offended whom excites his deepest sorrow, and to please whom is now the object of his most earnest desire. A general reformation of life will, therefore, be the only conduct, originated by the present temper of his heart. Against sin, against all sin, he will *set his face as a flint*. His passions, henceforth, will be subordinated to his conscience; and his conscience enlightened and directed by the Scriptures of Truth. Every lust will he labour to subdue, every enemy to overcome, and every temptation to resist or escape. More and more, continually, will this be the purpose and employment of his life. With increasing resolution he will *go from strength to strength;* improve in holiness, as he increases in years; and become, from time to time, more and more *meet to be a partaker with the Saints in light*, in their communion and their joys.

## REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations we learn, that a Repentance may exist, and go far, and yet not be Evangelical.*

From the account already given of the repentance experienced by Judas, it is plain, that he entertained such views, and felt such emotions, as are also felt by true penitents. There is nothing in the nature of the case, which hinders all these and others like them, from being experienced by any false penitent. From this fact it is clear, that False repentance may be easily mistaken for the True; and equally clear, that a careful discrimination is indispensably necessary to distinguish them from each other. Otherwise, the false penitent may be easily, and, for ought that appears, fatally, deceived. If the account, here given of Evangelical repentance, be admitted; the distinction between this and all counterfeits is clear and decisive. The false penitent never forms just views of the nature of sin; never hates it, as evil done to God and his fellow-creatures; never in this view, mourns for it; never confesses it ingenuously; and never faithfully forsakes it. He, who

cannot find these things in his heart and conduct, may safely conclude, that his repentance is not that of the Gospel.

2dly. *The same observations prove, that Repentance is a spirit, justly according with the real state of things.*

The penitent is really, as he pronounces himself to be, a sinner; guilty in the sight of God, and deserving of his wrath. Sin is really the great evil, which he feels, and acknowledges, it to be; and is therefore to be hated, lamented, confessed, and forsaken, in the very manner, determined on by himself. His situation is in all respects as bad, and his character as unworthy, as he supposes them. The *views* which he entertains of himself, therefore, are exactly agreeable to truth; and such as he is plainly bound to entertain. All views of himself, and of his condition, which are discordant with these, would be contrary to truth, and a mere mass of falsehood. Of the same nature are the *affections*, involved in Evangelical Repentance. They are the very affections, which necessarily arise out of these views; and the only affections, which, in the penitent's case, correspond with truth. Of course, they are plain and indispensable parts of his duty.

3dly. *These observations teach us, that Repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation.*

Without Repentance, the sinner would still continue to be a sinner; an enemy to holiness and to God, to happiness and to heaven. If he did not hate sin; it would be *physically* impossible, that he should forsake it; that he should love or practise holiness; that he should be cordially reconciled to God; that he should relish the happiness of heaven; or that he should desire, or enjoy, the friendship of virtuous beings. It would be impossible, that he should receive Christ as his Saviour; trust in his righteousness for acceptance; love his character; or welcome his mediation. At the same time, it would be *morally* impossible, that God should receive, or justify, the sinner; unite him to his family; or restore him to his favour. To all these things Repentance is plainly, and absolutely indispensable.

The views, which the penitent entertains of moral subjects, and the affections, with which he regards them, prepare him, and are indispensably necessary to prepare him, to partake of the favour of God, the employments of holiness, and the blessings of Redemption. Evangelical Repentance is the beginning of moral health in the soul. At the commencement of its existence, the former evil, morbid principles, begin to lose their hold, and to have their power diminished. The divine Physician then first achieves his victory over the moral diseases, which were before incurable; and the balm of *Gilead* begins to restore its decayed and ruined faculties. From this moment, immortal health, the life of Heaven, returns to the languishing mind; health that cannot decay, life that cannot terminate: the youth of angels, which cannot grow old, but is formed to increase, and bloom, and flourish for ever.

# SERMON LXXVIII.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS.—LOVE.

GALATIANS v. 22.—*But the fruit of the Spirit is love.*

HAVING considered, in preceding discourses, *Faith in Christ*, and *Repentance unto life*, the *two first* of those moral attributes, which I called *the Attendants of Regeneration;* I shall now go on to examine the nature of *the third*, and *fourth*, of these attributes: *Love to God*, and *Love to mankind.* As both these are only exercises of the same disposition, directed towards different objects, I shall here consider them together; reserving a separate discussion of them to a future occasion. *St. Paul* informs us, that *Love*, viz. the disposition mentioned in the text, *is the fulfilling of the Law;* that is, of the two great commands, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.* These commands constitute a primary part of a Theological system; and will necessarily become a subject of particular investigation in the progress of these discourses. They will, therefore, furnish an ample opportunity for the separate consideration of these two great exercises of Love.

In examining this subject, at the present time, it is my design,

I. *To exhibit the Nature of this Love;* and,

II. *To prove its Existence.*

I. *I shall endeavour to exhibit the Nature of Evangelical Love.*

1st. *The Love of the Gospel, is a Delight in happiness:* or, in other words, *Good-will towards percipient beings, as capable of happiness.*

Happiness is the object, ultimately, and alway, aimed at by the mind, under the influence of this affection. As percipient beings are the only beings capable of happiness, *the love of happiness is*, of course, *the love of percipient beings.* Of these, *Intelligent beings* are capable of so much greater and more important happiness, than *mere animals*, as scarcely to allow of any comparison between them. *The love of happiness*, therefore, is supremely *the love of Intelligent beings.* This, accordingly, has been assumed as a definition of Love. It is not however metaphysically correct. *A righteous*, or virtuous, *man will, as such, regard the life*, and of course the happiness universally, *of his beast;* and this, though a small, cannot fail to be a real, object of his regard.

A delight in happiness, metaphysically considered, supposes it enjoyed, or already in possession. When it is not enjoyed, and yet is supposed to be possible, the same affection becomes, and is

styled, *the Desire of happiness*. Whatever we delight in, when present and possessed, we desire, when absent, or unpossessed. The mind under the influence of this affection, therefore, while it rejoices in happiness actually enjoyed, necessarily wishes its existence, wherever it is capable of being enjoyed.

2dly. *This love of happiness is Universal.*

This proposition follows, unavoidably, from the former. If the mind delights in happiness, as such; it is plain, that this delight will exist, wherever the happiness is found. If it desire happiness, as such, this desire will be extended to every case, in which it perceives that happiness may be enjoyed. The delight, therefore, will be co-extended with the knowledge, which the mind at any given time possesses, of actual enjoyment; and the desire, with its knowledge of possible enjoyment. So far, then, as the views of any mind, in which this disposition exists, extend, its love of happiness will be universal.

3dly. *This love of happiness is Just.*

By this I intend, that the greater happiness, whether actual, or possible, will be loved more, and the smaller happiness less. This, also, is inherent in the very nature of the affection. If the mind delight in happiness; it follows, necessarily, that this delight must increase, as the object of it increases. For example: if it delight in the happiness of one being, it will equally delight in the same happiness of a second; in the same manner in that of a third; of a fourth; a fifth; a sixth; and so on, in that of any given, or supposable, number. Or, should we suppose one of these beings to be happy in any given degree; and that happiness doubled, tripled, quadrupled, or increased in any other degree; the delight of such a mind in this object would be increased in the same proportion. I do not here intend, that this affection will operate with the mathematical exactness, here stated. I am well aware, that such minds as ours, are utterly incapable of operating with their affections in this perfect manner. This mode of illustration has been here used, for the sake of exhibiting the general proposition in a manner clear and decisive; and, if I mistake not, it unanswerably evinces the truth of the proposition.

In entire accordance with this doctrine we are commanded *to love God with all the heart*, not only as an object of our *Complacency*, but of our *Benevolence* also. We are not only required *to approve of his perfect character*, but also *to delight in his perfect happiness*, or, as we more usually term it, *blessedness*. His perfect character is *the cause*, of which his perfect happiness is *the effect*. The former, it is our duty to regard with supreme complacency; the latter, it is equally our duty to regard with supreme benevolence.

No less accordant with this disposition, also, is *the second command of the same law. Our neighbour*, that is, any, and every individual of the human race, is the subject of the same happiness,

as ourselves. We are therefore required to *love our neighbour, as ourselves:* viz. because his happiness is of the same importance, as our own: not indeed mathematically, but generally, and indefinitely; as the words of the command import.

It is to be observed, here, that *Benevolence is the only object of this command.* The greater part of those, who are included, here, under the word neighbour, are wholly destitute of virtue, in the Evangelical sense. But towards any, and all, of these, it is physically impossible to excercise *Complacency:* this affection being no other than the love of such virtue.

4thly. *This affection is Disinterested.*

If the preceding positions be allowed, *this* follows, of course. Nothing is more evident, than that the mind, which loves happiness wherever it is, and in proportion to the degree in which it exists, must of course be disinterested. In other words, it must be without any partiality for its own enjoyment, or any preference of it to that of others. Its delight in the happiness, enjoyed by others, will be the same with that, which it finds in its own enjoyment; so far as it is able to understand, and realize, it in the same manner. We cannot, I acknowledge, either understand, or feel, the concerns of others in the same degree, as our own; and from this imperfection would arise, even if our benevolence were perfect, a difference in our estimation of these objects, which so far as I see, could not be avoided. But in cases, not affected by this imperfect state of our minds, cases, which even in this world are numerous, no reason can, in my view, be alleged, why the estimation should not be the same. In a more perfect state of being, it is probable, the number of such cases may be so enlarged, as to comprehend almost all the interests of Intelligent creatures.

5thly. *This love is an Active principle.*

By this I intend, that, in its nature, it controls all the faculties in such a manner, as to engage them supremely in the promotion of the great object, in which it delights. Of this truth we have the most abundant proof in the Scriptural exhibitions of the character of God; of the Redeemer; and of those saints, whose history they record. *God*, saith *St. John, is love. Every good gift*, saith *St. James, and every perfect gift, is from above; and cometh down from the Father of lights. Nevertheless*, saith *St. Paul, he left himself not without witness; in that he did good, giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. Thou art good*, says *David, and dost good; and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Jesus Christ*, says *St. Peter, a man who went about doing good.* It is hardly necessary to observe, that the whole body of worthies, presented to us in the Scriptures, were in this respect *followers of God, as dear children;* or that *the same mind was in them, which was also in Christ.* The Epistles of *St. Paul*, particularly, and his whole history, after his conversion, as given to us by *St. Luke*, are one continued proof, that this was

*his* ruling character. The love, which exists *in word, and in tongue*, the Scriptures reprobate; and approve, and enjoin, that only, which, in their emphatical language, exists *in deed and truth*. We hardly need, however, look to this or any source, for evidence concerning this subject. Love, in all cases, so far as our experience extends, prompts him, in whom it exists, to promote the happiness of the object beloved. So plain is this to the eye of common sense, that no person believes love to exist in any mind, which does not labour to accomplish happiness for the object, which it professes to love. Thus a parent, who neglects the happiness of his children, is universally pronounced not to love them; and thus persons, professing friendship for others, and inattentive at the same time to their welfare, are with a single voice declared to be friends in pretence merely. What is true, in this respect, of these natural affections, is altogether true of Evangelical love. Its proper character is to *do good, as it has opportunity*.

6thly. *This principle is the only Voluntary Cause of happiness.*

The benevolence of Intelligent creatures is the same, in kind, with the benevolence of God; and for this reason is styled *the image of God*. But the Benevolence of God is the single original cause, the sole, as well as boundless, source, of all the happiness found in the creation. In the great design of producing this happiness he has required Intelligent creatures to co-operate with himself. Of their labours to this end their own benevolence is the only immediate cause. Benevolence, therefore, in God and his Intelligent creatures, considered as one united principle of action, is the only voluntary source of happiness in the universe. As, therefore, none but voluntary beings can produce, nor even contrive, happiness; and as no voluntary beings, except benevolent ones, are active to this end; it is plain, that happiness is ultimately derived from benevolence alone; and but for its exertions would never have existed.

7thly. *This principle is One.*

By this I intend, that the same love is exercised by a virtuous mind towards God, towards its fellow-creatures, and towards itself. The affection is one. The difference in its exercises springs only from the difference of its objects. Love *is the fulfilling of the law:* that is, one affection exercised towards God, and towards man, is alternately the fulfilling both of the first and second commands. He who is the subject of one of these exercises is of course a subject of the other also. He, who loves God, loves mankind: he, who loves mankind, loves God. There are not two affections of the mind, in the strict and metaphysical sense; one of which is called love to God, or *Piety;* and the other love to mankind, or *Benevolence:* but there is one love, now exercised toward God, and now toward mankind.

II. *I shall now proceed to prove the Existence of this principle.*

The evidence, which I shall adduce for this purpose, will be derived,

1st. *From the Scriptures;* and,

2dly. *From Reason.*

*The first argument, which I shall allege from the Scriptures, is the Moral Law: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.*

I have already observed, that Benevolence, or love to happiness, or to Intelligent beings as capable of happiness, is the object, and the only object, of the second of these commands. Should any doubt remain on this subject, it may easily be removed by the consideration, that our Saviour has taught us *to consider our enemies, universally, as included under the word, neighbour.* The enemies of a good man, knowing him to be such, are always wicked men; and, having no holiness, or evangelical virtue, cannot, in *the physical sense*, be loved with *Complacency*, or *the love of virtue.* The love of happiness, therefore, or Benevolence, is the principle, especially, if not only, enjoined in this law. Accordingly, *our Saviour called the command, enjoining brotherly love*, that is, *the love of his disciples toward each other*, or, in other words, *Complacency, a New commandment.*

As the moral law, then, enjoins, especially, the love of happiness; that is Benevolence; so it evidently enjoins this disposition in a proportion, corresponding with that, which has been insisted on in this discourse. We are required in it to *love God with all the heart; and our neighbour as ourselves.* In other words, we are required to exercise this love proportionally to the importance, or greatness, of the object loved: supremely towards that object, which is supremely great and important; and equally towards those objects, whose importance is equal.

With this view of the law perfectly accords our Saviour's practical comment on the second command: *Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.* In this command, our own equitable wishes for good to be done to ourselves are made the measure of the good, which we are bound to do them.

2dly. *As another proof, I allege* Luke vi. 32, 33, 35, *For if ye love them, that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners, also, love those, that love them. But love ye your enemies; and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.*

In these declarations of our Saviour, it is manifest, First, that the love, which he enjoins, is *Disinterested love:* for it is productive of beneficence, without reference to a reward. Secondly; we learn from them, that even this is not sufficient to constitute the disinterestedness of the Gospel. It is still further required, that the benevolence shall operate towards enemies; overcoming all hostil-

ity towards those, who hate us; requiring us, instead of being *enemies*, to become *friends* to our enemies; to render good for their evil; and blessing for their cursing. Unless we do this, we are elsewhere informed in the Gospel, we are not and cannot, be *the children of our Father, who is in heaven.* Thirdly; we are taught that the disposition, with which we do good to others, for the sake of gaining good at their hands; or the spirit, with which we do good merely to those who do good to us; that is, *Selfishness*, in its fairest and most reputable form, neither merits, nor will receive, a reward; and is only the spirit of *publicans and sinners.*

3dly. *I allege, as another proof, the declaration of the Apostle,* 1 Cor. xiii. 5, *Love seeketh not her own.*

In this declaration, *St. Paul* has asserted the disinterestedness of Evangelical love, not only in the most explicit manner, but with the force, peculiar to himself. Literally, he declares, that love does not seek her own interest at all; but is so absorbed in her care for the common good, as to be wholly negligent of her personal concerns. This, however, I do not suppose to have been the meaning of the Apostle. But he plainly intends, that this spirit is wholly destitute of any selfish character. Less than this, it will, I think, be impossible to consider as meant by him in this passage.

With these three passages the whole volume of the Scriptures accords: and that these clearly determine the love, required in the Gospel, to be *the love of happiness, proportioned to the importance of the object loved, and disinterested in its nature;* the points, relative to this subject, which are chiefly disputed; cannot, I think, be denied without violence.

To this decisive voice of Revelation, Reason adds its own unqualified testimony: as I shall endeavour to show in the following observations.

1st. *The Benevolence, which I have described, is the only equitable spirit towards God and our fellow-creatures.*

That the interests of God are inestimably more valuable than our own, will not be questioned by any man. This being allowed; it can no more be questioned, that they deserve incomparably more regard, than our own. Nor can it any more be doubted, that the interests of our neigbour are, at a fair average, *equally* valuable with our own. The fact, *that they are ours*, certainly adds nothing to their value. For what, then, it may be asked, can they be more valuable, than those of our neighbour? God unquestionably regards them alike; and it will not be denied, that He regards them equitably, and in the very manner in which we ought to regard them.

A public or common good, therefore, is more valuable, and ought to be more highly regarded, than the good of an individual; for this plain reason, that it involves the good of many individuals. This has ever been the only doctrine of common sense. In free countries, particularly, where men have had the power, as well as

the right, to act according to their own judgment, a majority of votes has always constituted a law: obviously because a majority of interests ought ever to be preferred to those of a minority, and still more to those of an individual. On the same principle, laws, which consult the general good, are ever pronounced to be right; although they may operate against the good of individuals. On the same principle, only, are individuals required to devote their labour, their property, and at times their lives, for the promotion, or security, of the general welfare. Selfishness, on the contrary, which always prefers private good to public, would, if permitted to operate, produce an entire subversion of public good. All the views, affections, and operations, of selfishness, are unjust; the interests of an individual being invariably estimated more highly by this disposition, and loved more intensely, than their comparative value can ever warrant. It can never be a just estimation, which prefers the private good of one to the good of many, the interests of each of whom are just as valuable, as those of that one; or which prefers the interests of man to those of God. If this estimation is right; and the regard, which accompanies it; then God ought to give up his own kingdom, purposes, and pleasure, for the sake of the least of his Intelligent creatures: and the good of the universe ought to be sacrificed to the good of one.

2dly. *It is reasonable to suppose that God would create, and that he has created, Intelligent creatures with this just disposition.*

That there should no where exist, in the Intelligent kingdom, a disposition, regarding things according to their value, is a supposition too absurd in itself, and too dishonourable to the Creator, to be made by a sober man. Such a disposition, it is plain, must be more estimable, and lovely, to the eye of the Divine Mind, than any other, which is supposable. If, then, God made his works, with a design to take pleasure in them; or to be glorified by them, he could not fail to give existence to such a disposition; unless it was because he was unable. But this will not be pretended. Such a disposition, therefore, certainly exists.

3dly. *If there be no such disposition, there can be no pure or lasting happiness.*

For, in the first place, there is no original cause of happiness, but the action of minds. Minds are the only active beings in the universe. Matter, if eternal, must have been eternally quiescent. But minds never act, to the production of that, which they do not love. If, then, they did not love happiness, they could not act, to the production of it. Of course, *If God had not been benevolent*, that is, *if he had not loved happiness; he never could have produced it; nor created those beings, who were to be made happy.*

In the second place; *without the same disposition, Intelligent creatures could never produce happiness for each other.* Under the divine government, happiness, in an endless variety of forms, is produced by Intelligent creatures for each other. The degree,

in which their benevolent offices accomplish good for each other, is, to a finite eye, literally immense. But it is clearly evident, that if they were not benevolent, no part of this good would ever exist.

Should it be said, *that creatures, who are not benevolent, do in fact produce happiness for each other in the present world; as is unanswerably manifest in the proper influence of natural affection, and various other attributes of the human mind:* I answer, first, that all this happiness, like all other, is ultimately derived from the benevolence of God; and would have had no existence, had he not possessed this disposition. Secondly, the happiness, thus produced, is far from being pure, or lasting. Thirdly, Natural Affection is not an original and necessary attribute of a rational being; but has its origin, and continuance, in circumstances, which may be termed accidental, and accordingly has no existence, where those circumstances are not found. Fourthly, Natural Affection is an attribute of a benevolent as well as of a selfish being; and is therefore no part of selfishness. Fifthly, the Scriptures teach us, that even this good is not derived from the proper tendency of our selfish nature, but from a particular restraining influence of God on its proper operations; which either prevents their existence, or lessens their malignant efficacy. That the world is so comfortable, as it actually is, is, I apprehend, the result of a mere act of mercy on the part of God, rather than of the genuine tendency of the human character. Finally, should all be allowed to this source, which is claimed for it, the happiness which it yields is so mixed, and so transient, as to form an exception to the doctrine, which I am defending, too unimportant to deserve any serious attention.

In the third place, *there is no other disposition which is happy.*

*The happiness, inherent in a disposition, is the enjoyment either experienced in the exercises of the disposition itself; or springing from the consciousness of its excellence; or resulting from a knowledge of the desirable nature of its consequences.* Some of the exercises of selfishness are pleasant in themselves, and some in a knowledge of their consequences. Thus *pride* is, in a degree, always pleasing to the proud man; pleasing, I mean, in its very nature. The same thing may be said also of the sensual appetites, whenever they are gratified. Some of them, also, are pleasant in the knowledge of their consequences; particularly those, which respect *fame*, *power*, and *property*. But the pleasure, furnished by all of them, is in itself poor, transient, and mixed with no small pain and mortification. The pleasure, furnished by our sensual appetites, is also, a part, not of a selfish, but of a merely animal, nature; and, so far as it is temperately enjoyed, belongs equally to a benevolent as to a selfish being. Selfishness can here claim nothing, as being peculiar to itself, except inordinate indulgence; and this is, regularly, a diminution of the enjoyment,

and an accumulation of pain and sorrow. In the mean time, none of the affections of Selfishness yield happiness from a consciousness of their nature and operations. They cannot be seen to be excellent, because they are all obviously evil, and odious. They cannot be seen to be honourable, because they are all base and contemptible. Of course, the mind cannot approve of these affections, nor of itself, while indulging them; but must condemn both them, and itself, for cherishing them, as being vile and despicable.

*A great part of the happiness, enjoyed by Intelligent beings, arises from the knowledge, that they are esteemed, and loved, by other Intelligent beings.* This is an enjoyment, to which Selfishness can make no claim: for no being can approve of Selfishness. Whether it exists in himself, or in others, it necessarily, and always, awakens contempt. The selfish man is, therefore, cut off by his very nature from this delightful enjoyment.

At the same time, this spirit produces, of course, evils, immense in their number, and surpassing all finite estimation in their degree. Self-condemnation, the hatred and contempt of others, contentions, oppression, tyranny, war, and bloodshed; in a word, all the evils, occasioned by man to himself, or to his fellow-men, are uniformly, and universally, the effects of this disposition. No clearer proof can be reasonably demanded of its unhappy nature, and miserable consequences, than the unceasing, bitter complaints, with which this world every where resounds; almost all of which terminate in the deplorable nature of this disposition, or its malignant efficacy on the interests of man. It cannot be believed; it cannot with decency be said; that God has formed a universe of Intelligent creatures, and withheld from them all, that disposition, which alone is productive of happiness; and left them wholly to that, which is the source of misery alone. That God made the universe with an intention to make it happy, and upon the whole to make it supremely happy, will be denied by gross Infidels only. But it is plain, that this end would be impossible, unless he should give to Intelligent creatures this disposition.

4thly. *This is the only disposition, which can be approved, or loved, by God.*

*It is the only disposition, which is like that of God.* But all beings approve, and love, that in others, which they approve, and love, in themselves. God approves, and loves, himself for his benevolence. Of course, he cannot but approve, and love, the same disposition in his Intelligent creatures; and, by unavoidable consequence, must equally hate that, which is of an opposite nature.

*It is the only disposition, which can voluntarily become the means of his glory.* It has been already seen, that benevolence is the only *fulfilment of his law.* It was formerly shown, and is abundantly evident, that this disposition, and no other, voluntarily coin-

cides with him in promoting the great end of all his works; viz. the happiness of his immense kingdom. But it is plain, that this voluntary coincidence of his Intelligent creatures he must necessarily approve, and love: such approbation and love being, in every such case, inseparable from an Intelligent nature. All beings, and God as truly as any other, love, of course, a voluntary coincidence with their favourite designs; and necessarily approve of it also, whenever the designs themselves receive their approbation.

Finally; *it is the only amiable disposition.* There is nothing amiable, beside the voluntary promotion of happiness, and those minds which voluntarily promote it. But benevolence is the only disposition, and the minds in which it exists are the only beings, by which happiness is voluntarily promoted. These, therefore, are not only amiable, but the only things in the universe, which are amiable in any serious degree.

But to suppose, that God has not created such beings in the universe, as he can approve and love; such beings, as voluntarily become the instruments of his glory; such beings, as in their nature and efforts show, incomparably more than all others, his wisdom and goodness, as the Creator of all things; is an absurdity, too monstrous to be admitted by a sober man.

I shall only add to the proofs, already alleged, that *the existence of this disposition is unanswerably evinced by facts;* partly disclosed by Revelation, and partly obvious to Reason.

God, as was shown in a former discourse, is infinitely benevolent, and wholly disinterested. Christ has also been proved to sustain the same character. That *the same mind was in* the Apostles, *which was also in Christ*, cannot be disputed; nor can it reasonably be disputed, that it is possessed by every good man, and is that which constitutes the excellence of his character.

## REMARKS.

1st. *If these things be true; it is manifest, that Evangelical Religion is a very different thing from what it has been very frequently supposed.*

Evangelical Benevolence is the sum and substance of Evangelical religion; that, which, entering into Faith and Repentance, renders them excellent and lovely in the sight of God. It has its seat in the heart only; and not in external conduct, nor in the understanding. It is, therefore, totally different from all the external worship, and the external actions, sometimes termed *moral*, of the superstitious or merely moral man; from the rhapsodies, visions, and pretended revelations of the enthusiast; and from the speculative faith, and the enlarged understanding, of the mere philosopher.

2dly. *From these observations, also, it is evident, that the Religion of the Bible is as noble, as divine, as could be expected in a Revelation from God.*

The disposition, required of mankind by their Creator, as the amount of all that, which he chooses them to be, must be supposed to accord, in some good measure, with the excellence and dignity of his own nature. If, therefore, in a book, professing to be a Revelation from him, we should find the contrary character; viz. one, which was chiefly useless, and destitute of dignity and worth; demanded, as the sum of human duty; this fact would greatly weaken, nay, it would wholly destroy, its pretensions to be a Revelation from God. But, if the character, required in such a book, should be wholly pure, noble, and excellent; should this book be, at the same time, the only one, which either disclosed, or required, such a character; and should every thing, contained in it, perfectly accord with the requisition; strong presumption would be furnished in this manner, that it was indeed a revelation from God. Such is the character, required in the Scriptures.

3dly. *How desirable is that Change of heart, to which this disposition in man owes its existence.*

Who, with calm and just consideration of this subject, would not rejoice to be delivered from a narrow-minded, partial, bigoted, envious, proud, avaricious, malignant temper; and to become the subject of a benevolent, sincere, disinterested, pious, and expansive disposition, inclined to all good, and effectually prepared to love and promote, as well as to enjoy, it? a disposition, the same with that of the *general assembly of the first born;* the same with that of angels; the same with that of Christ; the same with that of God? All real and enduring good commences within the soul. This disposition is itself that commencement; the beginning of all noble pursuits, and dignified enjoyments; the means of ensuring peace and joy, within and without; of securing the love of all virtuous and excellent beings, and of gaining the favour and complacency of God. It fits us to live eternally; eternally to do good to our fellow-creatures; to improve and benefit ourselves; and to glorify our Maker and Redeemer, for ever. Eternal life, beauty, and happiness, in itself; it is the source of all other happiness, and peculiarly of the happiness and glory of heaven.

4thly. *How manifest is the Wisdom of God in effectuating, and requiring, this excellent disposition.*

Benevolence is to the Intelligent universe what Attraction is to the material one: the power which holds the parts together, and unites them in one immense and incomprehensible system. In accomplishing this end, it first forms them of such a character, as renders them capable of this union; a spirit expansive, harmonious, discerning the universal good, and delighting in it with complacency supreme and eternal. Each member of this great kingdom it attaches to each; and all to God. Each it prepares to understand, and to love, his own place, allotments, and enjoyments; and to be equally satisfied with the stations, and circumstances, of others. These, universally, he knows, are determined by Wisdom,

which cannot err, and by Benevolence, which cannot injure, in such a manner, as most perfectly to accomplish the supreme good of each, and of all. This good he prefers to every other: in this he unceasingly rejoices; to the accomplishment of this he consecrates all his powers. Whatever coincides with it he approves: whatever voluntarily promotes it he loves. To every such being he is bound by this great *bond of perfection;* perfectly binding together all perfect beings.

God, at the head of this amazing kingdom, he sees labouring with infinite power and goodness to accomplish this mighty purpose; and rejoices, that these perfections ensure its certain accomplishment. His virtuous creatures, also, he beholds honourably and delightfully employed, as voluntary agents and instruments, in the same exalted design. To love, and do, this is equally *his* glory, and *their* excellence and beauty. To both, therefore, he is inseparably and eternally united, with an attachment, which nothing can sunder; nothing weaken; by bands, which improve and strengthen for ever.

This divine union includes, alike, every member of the great system of Virtue. In Jehovah, it unites him with infinite attachment to his children. In them, it unites all, as one vast family, to him, with an attachment occupying all the faculties of the soul. He is the Sun, they the worlds and systems, which with perfect harmony move around him; attracting and being attracted; enlightened and reflecting light; enjoying and being enjoyed. With a perpetual emanation, his glory informs, pervades, and animates, the whole: while the respective *stars*, *differing* indeed from each other, are yet all really glorious; and shine with immortal beauty, and lustre.

This system of good, Selfishness aims, and attempts, to destroy. The atoms, which, when joined together, formed worlds and systems of usefulness and beauty, it finally separates by annihilating the attracting influence, which held them together. No longer drawn to their great Centre, no longer united to each other, they recede continually from God, and light and good, and from all future connexion with the Intelligent universe. The soul ceases from its union to its Maker, and becomes a stranger to its fellow-creatures. Deserting voluntarily all social beings, and by all deserted, it is henceforth alone, separated, and solitary, in the universe; a wanderer beyond the limits of the virtuous creation; moves only to disorder, and operates only to mischief: a dishonour henceforth to its Creator, and a nuisance to his Intelligent kingdom.

How infinitely important is it, then, that this glorious principle of Love should exist; that it should be effectuated by God; and that it should be required by the solemn authority, the supreme sanctions, of that Law, by which, throughout immensity and eternity, he governs the universe of virtuous beings.

# SERMON LXXIX.

REGENERATION.——ITS ATTENDANTS.——CONSISTENCY OF BENEVOLENCE WITH PROVIDING PECULIARLY FOR OUR OWN.

1 Timothy v. 8.—*But if any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house; he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

IN the last discourse, I attempted *to explain the Nature, and to prove the Existence, of disinterested Love.* To this doctrine there have been many *Objections;* as there have also been to every other peculiar doctrine of the Scriptures. It is now my design *to consider some of the principal.*

None of these objections is more frequently made, or made with stronger appearances of confidence, than the following: *that if we are required to love others as ourselves, we are,* of course, *required also to do as much for them, as for ourselves; to make the same provision for their wants, and to take the same effectual care of their concerns.* "The Scriptures," say the objectors, "inform us, that *love,* existing merely *in word and in tongue,* is not the love, which they require, nor at all the object of their approbation; that, as it is productive of no real good to others, it is clearly of no value. The love, which they require, is *that, which exists indeed, and in truth;* which, being the source of solid good, is necessarily the object of rational esteem. If, then, we are required to love; we are, of course, required to perform the actions which flow from love, and which prove its reality, and sincerity. If, therefore, we are required to love in any given degree; we are required also to perform the actions, which flow from it, in that degree. If we are to love others as ourselves; we are bound to do for them the same things, which we are bound to do for ourselves."

I can easily suppose this objection to be made with soberness and conviction. The reasoning, by which it is supported, has a fair appearance; and cannot be denied to be specious. It deserves, therefore, a sober consideration, and a rational answer. Such an answer I will endeavour to give; and will attempt to show, that the conclusion, drawn from this reasoning by the objector, is disproved by the very principles, on which it is founded; by the very nature of disinterested love, when considered in connexion with the circumstances of the present world. To this end, I observe,

I. *That, whenever the conduct proposed is physically impossible, it cannot be our duty.*

This assertion will be denied by no man. It can no more be denied, that it excludes from our active beneficence a very great proportion of the human race; viz. all, or almost all, those who are remote from us, and a very great proportion of those who are near to us. From doing good to the former we are prevented by distance of place. From doing good to very many of the latter we are equally prevented by their multitude: the number being so great, that we cannot benefit all, unless we give up the duty of being really useful to any.

It ought, however, to be here remarked, that all men can exercise a benevolent spirit towards all men, and can supplicate blessings for all in their prayers. It is also to be observed, that some persons can extend their acts of kindness very far; to distant nations, and to distant ages: particularly those, who are eminently qualified to instruct and inform mankind by their writings; and those who regulate the affairs of nations, and thus seriously affect the state of the world. I need not say how few of the human race are included in both these classes.

II. *Wherever this conduct would frustrate the great end of benevolence by lessening human happiness, it cannot be our duty.*

It will not be pretended, that the law, which requires us to exercise benevolence, or the love of doing good, requires us also to act in such a manner, as to prevent the existence of that good. That this would be, necessarily, the effect of the conduct, proposed by the objector, will be evident from the following considerations.

1st. *If the affairs, interests, and duties, of mankind were all thrown, as according to the objection they must be thrown, into a common stock; there would be little or no good done to any.*

The mass of concerns would be immense; could never be comprehended by the mind of man; and could, therefore, never be arranged into any order or method. But, without such arrangement, there could be no knowledge of what would be necessary, useful, or desirable. Without such knowledge, the interests of men could never be so disposed, as to be pursued with any advantage. Without such knowledge, the duties of men would never be wrought into such a system, as to be understood by him, who directed the efforts of others. Much less could they be understood by those, who are to make the efforts; or, in other words, to perform the active duties of society.

A small mass of ideas easily becomes too complex an object for the mind distinctly to comprehend, until the ideas are arranged in a regular scheme. Without such arrangement, the human capacity is too limited to think with any clearness, or success, wherever the objects of thought are even moderately numerous. But, in the case proposed, the number of objects in the affairs of a single town would be exceedingly numerous; and would wholly surpass the utmost comprehension of man.

In consequence of our want of capacity to comprehend, and methodize, these concerns, they would lie in a state of universal disorder and confusion; and all would of course go to ruin. Instead of the good, which is now contrived, and done, there would be comparatively nothing done, or contrived. Instead of the abundant food and raiment, instead of the comfortable habitations, the extensive instructions, and the multiplied kind offices, now furnished by mankind to themselves, and each other; none of these things would be supplied; nor any thing else, which is useful; nor, indeed, any thing else, which is necessary. Mankind, on the contrary, would be houseless, hungry, and naked; and in endless multitudes would perish with famine, heat, and frost.

Besides, every kind of human business is imperfectly done, and to little purpose, when it is done in the gross; compared with what is accomplished, when it is separated into parts, and these are severally distributed to different hands. In this case, the whole business is rendered simple, easy to be understood, and easy to be accomplished. In this manner, every thing is done much more expeditiously, and more perfectly. Much more is, therefore, done, and that which is done, being better done, will answer a much better purpose. Such has been the regular progress of things in all civilized nations; and it has ever borne an exact proportion to the degree of their improvement. The business of life has thus been actually, and sedulously, divided, wherever considerable designs have been skilfully carried on. In this manner, the effects of human industry, (or the business actually done) have been increased beyond what the most sanguine mind could imagine. One man, for example, to whom the whole business of making so simple a thing, as a *pin*, was allotted, could hardly finish twenty in a day. Ten men, dividing the several parts of the business among them, can easily finish more than forty-eight thousand. What is true of this subject is true, in different degrees, of all human business; and extends to the ship, the manufactory, and the farm, with an influence, generally the same.

2dly. *It is indispensable to the accomplishment of human concerns, that the division of human industry should be Voluntary.*

*Force*, and *pleasure*, are the only causes, by which men have been induced to labour. Under a free government, force cannot be applied to this end; nor, except very imperfectly, under a despotic one. Even where it is thus applied, it is so far unavailing, as to reduce the quantity, and value, of that which is done by slaves, or men compelled to labour, to one half, one third, or one fourth, of that which is voluntarily done by the same number of freemen. A single family, at the head of one hundred slaves, will easily consume all that is produced by the labour of those slaves: while that of an equal number of freemen would amply support five-and-twenty families. From these observations it is plain, that if the voluntary industry, now exerted, were to cease, and forced labour to be substituted for it, one half, two thirds, or three fourths,

of human enjoyments, now furnished by voluntary industry, would at once be lost by mankind.

Industry becomes voluntary, *only by the agreeableness of the employment chosen; or on account of the reward which it secures; or, what is more commonly the fact, by both. The nature of the employment* is often so important in this respect, that no reward can ever reconcile many persons to the employments, in which they are placed by their parents; or induce them to acquire the skill, which is necessary to success. Were we generally forced to our employments, we should find this generally the fact; and the whip would be almost as necessary to compel *our* industry, as it ever has been to compel that of slaves. Were it possible to manage a world in this manner, the result would still be the general diffusion of poverty, suffering, and depopulation. On the contrary, plenty, ease, and comfort; nay, convenience, and even luxury, are the regular result of voluntary industry, in all countries enjoying the common blessings of Providence.

3dly. *In this very manner God has divided the business of mankind by separating them into families.*

By the separation of mankind into families God has distributed their business in such a manner, that a little part is placed in every hand, which is capable of managing business at all; such a part, and such only, as each can easily comprehend, and easily accomplish. Human business is, therefore, so divided here, that it can be done; and done with ease, expedition, and success.

At the same time, the division is perfectly voluntary: the employment, in every case, being ordinarily chosen by the individual for himself. The situation also, in which he is placed, and the partner, with whom he is connected in life, are both objects of his choice: and these facts, united with the common rewards of industry, furnish all the reasons, which can usually exist, to render it cheerful, and efficacious.

This division is the best possible, because it is the simplest, and the easiest, possible; the result of mere nature; requiring the intervention of no force, law, or human contrivance: because it extends throughout the world, over every age and nation, in the same easy and perfect manner: because it exists, every where, through mere propensity; without any contention, and without any difficulty. It is the best, because it has been thoroughly tried; and has been always found peacefully and happily to accomplish the end in view. No attack has been able to change its course; no circumstances to check its progress. It is the best, because it is the establishment of God himself; the result of his perfect wisdom and goodness; and an honourable proof of these attributes in its Author. In perfect accordance with these observations it has ever proved the means of producing necessaries to the whole race of *Adam;* comfort and convenience to most; and, to not a small number, wealth, luxury, and splendour.

4thly. *The division of the world into families is of immense utility to mankind, as it generates Natural affection.*

Natural affection is solely the result of natural relations; and almost all these are originated by the family state. With every other distribution of mankind, which can be substituted for this, they are wholly incompatible.

The importance of natural affection to the human race is incalculable. It resists, in a great degree, the tendency of mere and absolute selfishness; expands and softens the heart; excites and nourishes sympathy and compassion; and prevents the world from becoming a mere seat of clashing, violence, and cruelty. The attachment, which natural affection forms in men towards the members of their families, ultimately extends itself, also, to their habitations, and farms; and by an easy process reaches their country, laws, government, and nation. All men, without it, would in the end become mere vagabonds and outcasts, thieves and robbers.

To prevent these evils, it would seem, God implanted in us this singular propensity of our nature: a propensity highly useful, when we are virtuous; and indispensable to our peace and comfort, while we are sinful. In the absence of virtue, it is the only tie which effectually binds mankind together.

5thly. *By the institution of families preparation is effectually made for the preservation, support, and education of children.*

The truth of this proposition, and the manner in which it is accomplished, will naturally be the themes of a future discourse, in which I propose more extensively to handle this subject. Suffice it now to say, that but for this institution children would neither be loved, nor preserved, nor educated. *The substance of all education is the establishment of good habits.* Habits extend, alike, to the body and mind; and equally influence our thoughts and affections, our language and conduct. Without them nothing in the man, character, or human life, is efficacious, permanent, or useful. To establish them, therefore, in the morning of life, is the great business of all wise and well-directed education. But habits are formed only by the frequent and long-continued repetition of the same measures; and nothing ever becomes habitual, except that, which has been long and often repeated. To accomplish such repetition, nothing will suffice but the steady affection of married parents: that is, so far as useful and moral purposes are concerned. Of course, but for this institution, children would never be habitually trained to industry, to economy, to submission, or to good order; nor to sweetness of disposition, tenderness of affection, amiableness of manners, offices of kindness, or any other useful conduct. Of course, when they were not left to perish, they would grow up without knowledge, useful principles, or useful habits; without the knowledge, or love, of good order; without amiableness; and without worth. Of course, they would become mere beasts of prey. Not only would civilized life, with all its

arts and improvements, with all the blessings of rational freedom and good government, with all the superior blessing of morality and religion, vanish from under heaven; but new horrors would be added to the society of savages. The world would become one vast den; and all its inhabitants would be changed into wolves and tigers.

6thly. *Were the affairs of mankind thrown together in a common stock, according to the scheme of the objector; as all would know, that every man was entitled alike to the fruit of the labours of all, none would labour, except for the present moment.*

Neither inclination, nor duty, will ever prompt any man to labour for another, who, while equally able, will not labour for himself. That inclination will not produce this effect, I need not attempt to prove: that duty will not, is alike the decision of the Scriptures and Common sense. *He that will not work, neither let him eat,* is equally the judicial sentence of both.

In the *present* state of man, amid all the advantages, furnished to industry by education, habit, example, and reward, the number of idlers is not small. In the *proposed* state, it would include the whole number of the human race. There would, therefore, be originally, no disposition to labour. Should we, however, suppose some tendencies of this nature to exist; a complete discouragement would be thrown on all, by the knowledge, that the proper reward of every industrious effort would either be wholly prevented, or snatched away by the hands of those, who would not labour at all. Of course, mere necessaries; such as food, and clothes, and habitations, and fuel; would be provided only in the degree which absolute necessity demanded, even by those who were industriously inclined. What, then, would become of the rest? Plainly, where they did not plunder, they would perish.

As, therefore, *necessaries only* would be provided, and even these only in the most stinted manner; it is evident, that all the *comforts* of men would vanish at once. All the blessings of civilized life; its knowledge, arts, refinement, and religion; would cease to exist. There would be neither schools, nor churches: for none would be inclined, nor able, to build them. There would be neither instructers, nor ministers; neither legilsators, nor magistrates. Law, protection and justice, learning and religion, together with a host of blessings which they lead in their train, would visit the world no more.

7thly. *All the duties of man respect, especially, the objects which he best knows; those, particularly, which are most, and most commonly, within his reach; and to which he can most frequently, and effectually, extend his beneficence.*

Man owes more to the poor in his neighbourhood; to his neighbours generally; to the town, and the country, in which he lives; than to others. The reason is obvious. It is in his power to do them more good; and God has placed him where he is, that he may

do this very good. For the same reason he owes more to his own family; because he can do more good to the members of it, than to any other equal collection of mankind.

As, therefore, it is the indispensable duty of all men to do the most good in their power; and as this is the direct dictate, the genuine tendency, of Benevolence; so it is certain, that the division of mankind into families furnishes the fairest, and the only fair, foundation for accomplishing this purpose in a successful manner. On any other supposable plan, instead of increasing the efficacy of benevolence, or multiplying the enjoyments of mankind, we should, in a great measure, cramp the former, and destroy the latter.

## REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations it is evident, that no objection lies, from the nature of benevolence, against this great requisition of the Gospel.*

From the considerations which have been alleged it is manifest, that the arrangement of mankind into families is the foundation of more possible, and more actual good, than could be accomplished by any other means: of more, if man were perfectly disinterested, and yet possessed of his present, limited capacity; of incalculably more, as man really is; a selfish, fallen creature. At the same time, infinitely more evil is prevented. The Gospel, therefore, has directed the efforts of human benevolence in the best manner; and so, that they may be truly said to be employed with the highest advantage.

At the same time, the wisdom of God is strongly manifested in furnishing every Individual of the human race with so desirable a field for the exercise of his benevolence. In each case, this field is at his door; always within his reach; easily comprehended; necessarily delightful; ever inviting, and ever rewarding his labours. At the same time, it is sufficiently wide to employ, and exhaust, all his contrivance, and all his active powers. No where else could he do so much good: and the utmost, which he can do, can be done here. This field is also provided for *every man*. Objects of beneficence are furnished to him, of course; and for all those objects an efficient benefactor is supplied. Thus, in the simplest of all modes, is provision effectually made for the beneficence of all, and the comfort of all.

At the same time, this happy arrangement becomes, of course, the foundation of the happiest distribution of mankind into larger societies; and the means of uniting to them, in the strongest and most enduring manner, the attachment of the individuals. He, therefore, whose superior powers, and opportunities, enable him to extend the offices of good-will beyond this little field, has one which is wider, always spread around him; where the superior powers may always be advantageously employed. *This more ex-*

*tended scene of usefulness is a mere appendage to the other.* Were there no families, there would be no country: were there no *little* spheres of beneficence; there would be no *great one:* and were good-will not exercised first towards those who are near; it would never be extended to those who are distant. The kindness, learned by the fireside, and practised towards the domestic circle, is easily spread by him who is invested with sufficient talents, through a country, or extended over a world.

2dly. *These observations clearly show the folly of Godwin's system of human perfectibility.*

This wretched apostle of Atheism, with a weakness exceeded only by his audacity, has undertaken, in form, to show himself wiser than his Maker. For this purpose, he has boldly declared marriage to be an unjust monopoly; and the institution of families to be the means of preventing the happiness and perfection of man. Of this perfection a promiscuous concubinage, and a community of labours, and of property, are, in his opinion, essential constituents. Nor has the whole concurring experience of mankind, invariably opposed to his doctrines, been sufficient to awaken him from his dreaming speculations to sober thought, and the exercise of common sense. This system, if it may be called such; this crude gathering together of ideas into a mob; he professedly founds on the doctrine of disinterested good-will: and *these* he professes to be the genuine consequences of this glorious principle. Were they indeed its consequences, every good man would be struck with amazement and horror: for they would undoubtedly annihilate all the comfort, peace, and hopes, of mankind. That Benevolence, which is the only virtue, would prove the most fruitful and efficacious cause of absolute destruction to all human good: and its glorious character, instead of being the voluntary cause of happiness, would be exchanged for that, of being only, and fatally, the voluntary cause of misery.

Who, for example, would labour; if he were uncertain, that he should enjoy the fruit of his efforts: much more, if he were assured, that he should not enjoy it? What multitudes now refuse to labour, when completely secure of all its products? Were this stimulus to industry taken away, the exertions of man would terminate in a moment; and the world would become the seat of universal inexertion and idleness. The food, clothes, and other comforts, now brought into existence by the toil of man, are barely sufficient to supply his immediate wants. All the food, annually produced, is annually consumed. Multitudes are scantily supplied: while always some, and in particular seasons great numbers, even in industrious and fruitful countries, perish with hunger. Suppose half the labour, by which food is furnished, were to cease. What would be the consequence? The answer cannot be mistaken. Multitudes must immediately die; and still greater multitudes perish by gradual suffering, and lingering want. The young, particularly,

the infirm, the feebler sex, together with all those, unaccustomed to labour at all, or unacquainted with that kind of labour, by which food is produced, must, where they did not subsist by plundering others, become, speedily, victims to famine. Within the period of a single generation, the present population of the globe would be reduced to that of an *American* wilderness. *China*, *India*, and *Europe*, would be emptied at once. The arts of life, the knowledge, the order, the safety, the refinement, the humanity, the morals, and the religion, of civilized society would vanish; and hunting, and scouting, and pawawing, be substituted in their stead. The regions, which are now beautified with verdant fields, and enriched with luxuriant harvests; whose hills and plains are adorned with cheerful villages and splendid cities; in which thousands of churches invite mankind to the worship of God; and ten thousands of schools allure their children to knowledge and improvement; would become a vast *Patagonian* desert, gloomily set with here and there a solitary weekwam; wandered over, at times, by the prowling foot of a savage; and, when undisturbed by the warwhoop, the shrieks of terror, or the groans of suffering, hushed into the universal sleep of silence and death. That such would be the fact is certain, because, where property has for a length of time continued unsafe, it has all regularly existed.

One half of the story, however dismal the recital may seem, has not yet been told. The very savages have families; and provide for them with no little care. We must sink below the *Patagonian*, *who performs this duty*, to find either the character, or the circumstances, of those, *who do not*. The savages, in many instances at least, are chaste; in all, are the subjects of natural affection: and feel strong attachments to their friends, and their nation. These means of comfort, these last hopes of virtue, the philosopher, whom I have mentioned, proposes to destroy. In their stead he leaves nothing, but the fierce and brutal passions of men, sanctioned by the voice of philosophy, and legalized by the decrees of legislation. These passions and appetites, wholly unrestrained, because thus legalized and sanctioned, would originate, direct, and control, all the future conduct of men. What these passions would dictate we know, from what they have always dictated. What they would accomplish we know, from what, when let loose, they have heretofore accomplished. If any man is at a loss on this subject, he may find a faint image of what he seeks in a den of thieves, or a horde of banditti. To complete the picture, let him cast his eye onward to a lair of wild beasts, and a sty of swine. With all these objects in view, he would find a faint image of the degraded, ferocious, guilty, suffering, state of this miserable world, accomplished by these *Godwinian* means of perfection. Virtue itself, therefore, according to the scheme of this writer, would become the cause of exterminating all virtue from the breast of man; as well as of rooting all enjoyment out of the present world.

3dly. *We have, here, a specimen of the success, with which human philosophy directs the moral concerns of mankind.*

The Scriptures have required us to *love our neighbour as ourselves;* and have directed *the application* of this principle in such a manner, as to give it its utmost efficacy, and to produce, by means of it, the greatest mass of human good. "God," says *Dryden*, "never made his work, for man to mend." A philosopher, laying hold on this principle, and understanding it only in the gross, has undertaken to direct its application anew; and in a manner better suited to his own feelings. The consequence, as we have seen, is, the gold is changed into dross in a moment; the food into poison. That, which, as the Scriptures taught and directed it; nay, that, which, left to itself, to its own inherent tendencies, would produce nothing but happiness; would, as taught by this infidel philosopher, destroy all the good of man. The benevolence of the Scriptures would make heaven: that of *Godwin* would produce a hell. Such are the effects of human philosophy, when, resisting the ordinance of God, and forgetting, that *the foolishness of God is wiser than men*, she boldly interferes with the system of his truth and providence. The scene before her *is as the garden of Eden;* filled with life, beauty, and happiness; brilliant and glorious as is the heaven-devised landscape; and fraught, as Paradise, with *every thing good for food*, or *pleasant to the eye*. She is still unsatisfied with her allotted condition, and with the scheme of her destined enjoyment. Not desirous of becoming, but conscious of having already become, *as gods, knowing good and evil*, she puts forth her presumptuous hand; and, resolved to add to her stock of blessings such, as she knows to be prohibited, seizes in an evil hour the forbidden good. How wonderful, how distressing the change! In a moment the fascinating scene has vanished; and paradise, with all its beauty, happiness, and splendour, has fled for ever. Where bloomed the tree of life, and flowed the waters of immortality, nothing remains, but a world *of thorns and briars*, an immeasurable waste of sorrow and death.

# SERMON LXXX.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS.—CONSISTENCY OF BENEVOLENCE WITH SEEKING SALVATION.

ROMANS ii. 6, 7.—*Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.*

IN the last discourse, I considered *one favourite objection* against the doctrine of disinterested Love: viz. *If we are required to love others as ourselves, we ought to do as much for them as for ourselves:* particularly, *we ought to make the same provision for them, and their families, which we are bound to make for ourselves, and our families.*

This objection, I endeavoured to show, is so far from being grounded in truth, or from being a general consequence from the doctrine of disinterested Love, that, as the world is constituted, Love dictates the contrary conduct. Disinterested love prompts those, who possess it, to produce the greatest mass of happiness in their power. But the scheme proposed, instead of producing more happiness, would destroy that, which now exists, and subvert whatever is desirable in the present state of things.

In this discourse, I propose to consider another plausible objection against this doctrine, viz. *that we are commanded to seek eternal life, as the proper reward of our faith and obedience; and that this reward is promised to those, who believe and obey, by God himself. This command, and this promise,* it is alleged, *being given by God himself, cannot be denied to be right. That we ought, therefore, to seek for everlasting life, must of course be admitted. But this,* it is asserted, *is aiming at a reward; is a conduct, springing from self-love; and is not disinterested. It follows then,* say the objectors, *either that disinterested love is not required in the Scriptures; or that the requisitions of the Scriptures are inconsistent with each other.* This objection, it will be observed, lies in *the conclusion only.* The premises are just and true. If the conclusion follows, I will give up the doctrine.

*Lord Shaftsbury* formerly advanced with great labour and parade, a similar doctrine; but for a very different purpose. *He* maintained, that disinterestedness is virtue, and the only virtue. At the same time, he denied, that it could consist with any hope of reward, or any fear of punishment. *These,* he declared, *made virtue mercenary, mean, and selfish. True virtue,* according to his scheme, *consists wholly in doing good for the sake of that good.*

*for the pleasure, found in the good done, considered by itself, and wholly unconnected with any consequences; without any regard to advantages, arising from it, or to disadvantages, springing from the contrary conduct.*

This celebrated writer, it is true, teaches, elsewhere, the opposite doctrine; and asserts, that *all the obligation to be virtuous arises from its advantages, and from the disadvantages, attendant upon vice; and that such advantages are a great security, and support, to virtue.* These, and other things, of the like nature, he declares with no less confidence, than the former opinions. It would be easy, therefore, to refute him by his own declarations. But this, though it might answer the purposes of mere controversy, would not satisfy a Christian audience. Were infidels required to be consistent with themselves, they never would appear in the field of debate.

The conclusion, which *Lord Shaftsbury* drew from his principles, was, that *the Scriptures, so far as they have influence, annihilate, by their threatenings and promises, all virtue.* Hence he inferred, and, as it would seem, in his own view irresistibly, *that the Scriptures cannot be the word of God.* Both these views of this interesting subject are, I apprehend, radically erroneous, and founded in false and imperfect conceptions of disinterested love.

In the text it is declared, that *to those, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will render,* as a reward, *eternal life.* To seek for glory, honour, and immortality, therefore, is in a high degree pleasing to God; and must, of course, be truly and eminently, virtuous conduct. If this conduct consists with disinterestedness, and arises from it; it must be acknowledged on the one hand, that disinterestedness is not impeached by the objection, already recited; and on the other, that the Scriptures, while they require, and encourage, us to seek eternal life, do not render virtue mercenary; nor destroy, nor in any degree lessen, either virtue itself, or the obligations to virtue.

Before I enter upon the direct proof of this doctrine, it ought to be remarked, that the scheme of *Lord Shaftsbury* confutes itself. His favourite doctrine is, that virtue consists wholly in doing good for its own sake, without any regard to any advantage, which may follow from it; or to any disadvantage, which may arise from a contrary conduct: such regard being, in his view, a destruction of virtue. Now let me ask, What is the difference between doing good, for the sake of *the pleasure attending it,* and doing good for the sake of *the pleasure following it?* According to *Lord Shaftsbury,* virtue consists in doing good, for the sake of the pleasure, which it furnishes. Suppose, then, *the virtuous action to be done now, and the pleasure,* furnished by it, *to be enjoyed an hour hence, or to-morrow.* Would it be, in any sense, more mercenary to do the action, for the sake of enjoying this pleasure an hour hence; or to-morrow; supposing the pleasure to be the same; than for

the sake of enjoying it at the time, when the action is done? The pleasure, according to the supposition, *is the same in kind and degree.* Can it, then, be any more or less virtuous, to be thus influenced by a pleasure, which will exist an hour hence, or to-morrow, than by the same pleasure, existing at the present moment?

The truth, in this case, undoubtedly is, that it is neither more nor less virtuous, to be influenced in the same manner and degree, by the same kind and degree of pleasure, found in the same object, whether the pleasure is to be experienced at one time, or at another. The *nature of the pleasure, which is enjoyed,* and *the nature of the object, whence it is derived,* render the action, in which that pleasure is sought, either virtuous, or not virtuous. If we take pleasure in happiness wherever it is enjoyed, and in promoting it wherever this is in our power; if, at the same time, this pleasure is proportioned to the happiness onjoyed, or promoted; we are, of course, the subjects of virtue; and *that,* just so far, as the pleasure is experienced. The time, at which it is experienced, is, here, evidently of no consequence; and cannot, even remotely, affect the subject. If, then, it is mercenary, mean, and selfish, to be influenced by this pleasure, expected at a future time; it is equally selfish, mean, and mercenary, to be influenced by the same pleasure, expected at the time when the action is performed.

That the pursuit of eternal life is wholly consistent with the nature of disinterested love, I shall now attempt to show by the following considerations.

1st. *Our happiness is a desirable object; and deserves to be sought in a certain degree.*

Our happiness is, in this respect, exactly of the same nature with that of others; is as truly desirable, and as really deserves to be promoted, as that of any created beings whatever. In whatever degree it exists, it ought to be delighted in: in whatever degree it is capable of existing, it ought to be desired. As the fact, *that it is our happiness,* renders it no more valuable than that of others; [illegible]lainly, it does not render it at all less valuable. It claims, t[illegible]o be promoted on the same grounds, as any other h[illegible] the same value. As it is entrusted to our own peculiar [illegible]mands more from us, as that of others does from them. Fo[illegible]urselves we can do more than we can for others; and this of course is our duty.

2dly. *Neither our present nor future happiness is necessarily inconsistent with that of others.*

All the good, which God has made it lawful for us to enjoy in *this world,* is consistent with the good of others. Whenever it is promoted, therefore, there is a direct increase of the general happiness. To produce this effect is the great duty, and dictate, of benevolence; and must of course be right.

*Our eternal good* cannot fail to be consistent with the good of the universe. *God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner; but*

*would rather, that he would repent and live.* Accordingly he hath *commanded all men every where to repent.* What he has thus commanded, cannot but be right in itself. Accordingly he hath directed, that our *prayers and supplications should be made for all men.*

What the Scriptures thus teach, Reason wholly approves. We are all made capable of happiness. This capacity was not given in vain; but was intended to be supplied. Every man, who thinks soberly at all, feels, and acknowledges, accordingly, that he is bound to promote, as much as in him lies, the happiness of every other man, both present and future: and no man would fail to be self-condemned, if he were to indulge a wish, or even a willingness, that any one of his fellow-creatures should be miserable hereafter. Nay, indifference to this subject would not fail of being followed by severe reproaches of conscience. But what it is the duty of all men thus to wish, and to seek; what no man can oppose, or regard with indifference, without guilt; it is peculiarly his duty to wish, and seek for himself; both because the accomplishment of this work is committed to him by his Maker, and because this work can be done by him more effectually, than by any other.

3dly. *We are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves; that is, generally, and indefinitely, as well as ourselves; and of course are at least equally required to love ourselves as we love our neighbour.*

The rectitude of this law cannot be questioned even by *Lord Shaftsbury;* nor can he, or any other man, deny, that it exhibits to us disinterested love in the fairest form, and the strongest manner. But, as has been already shown, we are bound by the dictates both of reason and revelation to seek the future and eternal good of our neighbour; to desire it, and to promote it, as far as is in our power. By this very command, then; the law, originally enjoining benevolence as the great duty of intelligent beings; a law, to which Reason unconditionally subscribes; we are absolutely obliged to seek our own eternal life.

4thly. *Our eternal life is in itself an immense good.*

The endless happiness of a rational being is of more value, than can be conceived by any finite mind. Within a moderate period, it will amount to more, than all the happiness, which in this world has been enjoyed, or will ever be enjoyed, here, by all its inhabitants. Whatever is endless admits of no definite comparison with that which is not. But the happiness of a future state is not endless merely; it is also endlessly increasing; and will soon rise in degree, as well as duration, above the highest human comprehension. Such, of course, is the addition, made to the common good of the universe, whenever the eternal life of an individual is secured. To neglect the pursuit of such happiness, as this, is madness: to oppose it is malignity, which no words can describe.

5thly. *Eternal happiness consists in eternal disinterestedness, and its consequences.*

The happiness of heaven arises from the disinterested love of God, communicated in various blessings to his children; in their disinterested communications of good to each other; and in the enjoyment, derived by their minds from the exercises of virtue. It is acknowledged, on all hands, that it is desirable to live virtuously *here*. All the reasons, which operate in this case, render it at least equally desirable to live virtuously *hereafter*, throughout any, and every, period of duration, in which such a life may be enjoyed. It is by all men acknowledged, that it is useful to do good *here*, and *at the present time*. He, who makes this acknowledgment, cannot without gross self-contradiction deny, that it is equally useful to do good, *wherever it may be done*, and *at every future period*. If, then, it is proper; if it is virtuous; to desire, and to seek, to live a virtuous life, or to do good, in the present world; it is equally virtuous, and equally proper, to desire, and seek, to do the same things in a future state of being. All the labours, then, by which we may possess ourselves of such a life in the present world, must, with equal propriety, be directed to the attainment of such a life in the world to come.

But it is not only *desirable* and *proper*, that we should do this in the present world; it is a *plain, high, and indispensable duty;* and in a sense, *the sum of all our duty;* so far as this world is concerned. It cannot but be perceived, that it is, in the same sense, the sum of all our duty, with respect to the future world.

This, however, is far from being the amount of the whole truth concerning this subject. As much as eternity exceeds time; as much as perfect virtue excels the present frail character of good men, here; as much as endless virtue, as much as endlessly increasing virtue, outruns in its importance the transient virtue of this momentary life; so much more is it our duty to seek the good of a future life, than that of the present. Indeed, man lives here, only to become prepared to live hereafter. Our whole duty, therefore, ought, during the present life, to be performed with a supreme reference to that which is to come.

Thus the pursuit of eternal good is so far from being opposed to disinterestedness, from being mercenary, mean, and selfish; so far from destroying the nature of virtue, or lessening its obligations; that it is its genuine dictate; its spontaneous tendency; its most exalted aim. No virtuous mind, if properly informed, can fail of pursuing this object; and no object, which respects ultimately the present world, can call forth virtuous exercises of so elevated and excellent a nature.

6thly. *By our eternal life the happiness of all virtuous beings is greatly increased.*

*There is joy in heaven,* saith our Saviour, *over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no*

*repentance.* Whatever else may be the meaning of Christ in this passage, it is unquestionable, that the inhabitants of heaven experience a real joy in the repentance of a sinner. Reason, as well as Revelation, clearly teaches us, that virtuous beings cannot fail to find enjoyment in this subject, because Repentance is an exercise of virtue, and the means of securing happiness. In the future virtue, and future happiness, of such a sinner, the same beings will, at all times, find similar enjoyment; increasing continually in degree, as these objects of it increase. As these will, at the commencement of a future existence, be perfect; and will rise higher, and higher, in the same perfection for ever; so it is plain, the enjoyment, found in them, will increase throughout every succeeding period. Thus every inhabitant of this world, who secures his own eternal life, becomes an everlasting, and perpetually increasing, benefit to the virtuous universe; a blessing, which no words can describe, and whose value no numbers can reckon. Can it be necessary to ask, whether it is virtuous to aim at this character?

7thly. *God is glorified, whenever we seek, and obtain, eternal life.*

When Christ was born, a multitude of the heavenly host sung, *Glory to God in the highest*, because there was *peace on earth, and good-will towards men.* But if none of the human race should experience this good-will; that is, if none of them should obtain eternal life; the glory, otherwise springing from this source, would be prevented. To this glory of God every person, then, who secures eternal life, contributes, by accomplishing, in one instance, that, out of which the glory arises. The glory of God, in this case, is *a whole*, made up of the individual instances, in which he is glorified. If therefore, no individual sought his salvation, none would obtain it; and, if none obtained it, the work would not be done; and the glory of God, in this important particular, would not be accomplished. *How* important it is, may, in some measure, be discerned from these facts: that God sent his own Son, to die, that we might live; and his Spirit, to renew us, that we might become heirs of life.

Thus have I endeavoured to show, that the pursuit of eternal life is so far from being opposed to the nature of disinterested Love, that it is one of its primary dictates; a conduct, invariably springing from its influence; and that the Scriptures, instead of lessening, or destroying, virtue, by requiring this conduct of us, have increased the obligations to it, and directed it to its proper end.

Those, who make the objections, contended against in this discourse, have in my view, always failed of distinguishing between *disinterestedness* and *uninterestedness.* The distinction between them is, however, perfectly clear, and incalculably important. To be *disinterested* is to be *without a selfish interest* in any given thing or things; to be *uninterested* is to have *no interest* in them at all. *A disinterested man may take the deepest interest* in any subject; and,

*the deeper the interest, the more disinterested he may be. The uninterested man can have no interest in that subject, either selfish, or benevolent.* To be absolutely disinterested is to be absolutely free from selfishness. To be absolutely uninterested is to be absolutely without any interest, or concern, in any thing. A perfectly disinterested man would experience a supreme delight in the perfect happiness of the universe. A perfectly uninterested man, if we can suppose such an one to exist, would feel no concern in any happiness whatever. The reason, why these terms have been supposed to denote the same thing, may have been, that *the word* INTERESTED *is frequently opposed to each of them.* This word originally denotes *the concern, which we feel in any thing;* but has long been figuratively, and very commonly, used to denote *a selfish concern;* probably, because the interest, which the human heart feels in most things, is so generally a selfish interest.

It is not my design to contend, that *there is not a real and great pleasure, found in the exercises of virtue;* nor that *the virtuous man does not always experience this pleasure in such exercises;* and *that, in exact proportion to his virtue;* nor that *this is not a proper motive to engage him to these exercises.*

The true nature of virtue is well described in this definition: *the love of doing good; or the love of promoting happiness.* In all the good, therefore, which is done by ourselves, or others, and, of course, in all that is enjoyed by ourselves or others, whenever it is not inconsistent with some greater good, virtue delights of course. In its own proper nature, it aims at such good; and for such it labours, whoever is to be the recipient. Its true excellence lies in this: that *it is the voluntary, and only source of happiness in the universe.* In aiming at our own happiness there is no *necessary* selfishness. Selfishness consists in a preference of ourselves to others, and to all others; to the universe, and to God. This is sin; and all that in the Scriptures is meant by sin. In every individual sin, this will invariably be found to be the essential and guilty character. Thus sensuality is the desire of self-gratification, at the expense of any, and all, other happiness. Thus ambition is the desire of aggrandizing, and avarice the desire of enriching, ourselves, in preference to the interests of all others. From this spirit arises all our opposition to God, and all our injustice to his creatures. He, who has seriously and entirely preferred God to himself, or the good of the universe to his own private, separate good, has, in the complete sense, become virtuous.

God wills our happiness. It is therefore right, it is virtuous, in us to seek, and promote it, both here and hereafter. In this conduct there is no selfishness. We do, indeed, commonly pursue it, in preference to that of all others. Such a pursuit of it is sinful; and the spirit, with which we pursue it, is, by turns, every sinful passion and appetite, and the source of every evil purpose and effort,

towards God and our fellow-creatures. Our pride, impiety, rebellion, and ingratitude; our self-dependence, our impatience, and murmuring, under the government of God; are all only different forms of this disposition. The parsimony, fraud, and oppression, of the Miser; the envy, intrigues, conquests, and butcheries, of Ambition; the rapacity, injustice, and cruelties, of Despotism; the sloth, lewdness, gluttony, and drunkenness of the Sensualist; the haughtiness, wrath, revenge, and murders, of the Duellist; are nothing but selfishness, appearing in its true nature, and genuine operations.

## REMARKS.

*In these observations we have another specimen of the havoc, which philosophy has made of divine subjects, and of the great interests of man.*

Few writers have been more admired, and applauded, than *Lord Shaftsbury;* and, among all his writings, none have been more applauded, than the Work, in which the doctrine, opposed by me, is taught. Yet in this work we are informed, that to have any regard either to future rewards or punishments, is mean and mercenary; and, of course, instead of being virtuous, or consisting with virtue, is only criminal. It must, threrefore, be odious in the sight of God; and the proper object of his wrath and punishment. Accordingly, this writer informs us directly, that "*all reference, either to future rewards or punishments, lessens and destroys virtue, and diminishes the obligations to be virtuous.*" The anger of God against a sinner is a dreadful punishment. The approbation of God, and his consequent love, are glorious rewards. But to regard this anger, to be afraid of it, to seek to avoid it, is, according to *Lord Shaftsbury*, mean and mercenary, odious and wicked. The contrary conduct must, of course, bear the contrary character. It must be honourable and generous, spirited, amiable, and virtuous, to disregard the divine anger; to have no fear of God before our eyes; and willingly to become the objects of Infinite indignation. Equally mean and mercenary, and therefore equally hateful and guilty, is it, in the eyes of this writer, to prize the approbation of God; to desire an interest in his love; or to seek the attainment of either. Of course, to disregard *both* must, according to this scheme, be virtuous, honourable, and deserving of commendation. The real nature of all conduct God cannot but know intuitively; and, without injustice, cannot fail to regard it according to its real nature, and treat the subjects of it as they actually merit. Hence, as he cannot but discern the meanness and mercenariness, the odiousness and guilt, of those who dread his anger, and seek to avoid it; who prize his approbation; and love, and labour, to obtain them; he is bound, he cannot fail, to punish them for this criminal conduct. As he equally discerns the virtue of those, who

disregard his anger, approbation, and love; he cannot fail to reward them.

If God is angry with any of his Intelligent creatures; it is undoubtedly with those, who have broken his law. That he has given a law to mankind, *Lord Shaftsbury* himself acknowledges; nor does he deny, that mankind have, in some instances, broken this law. Indeed, it could not be denied with common decency. In this law, whatever it be, his pleasure is expressed, and enjoined, as the rule of duty to rational beings. This rule is, in his view, and therefore in fact, a wise, just, and good rule for the direction of their conduct. Conformity to it is conformity to what is wise, just, and good; or, in other words, is virtue, or excellence of character: while disobedience to it is opposition to what is wise, just, and good; or, in other words, sinfulness and turpitude of character. Every law, and this as truly as any other, annexes a reward to obedience, and a punishment to disobedience; otherwise it could not be a law. But to regard either this reward, or this punishment, is, according to *Lord Shaftsbury*, to be mean and mercenary; and so far, therefore, ceasing to be virtuous. If this reward and punishment *are to have no influence* on mankind; they are nugatory; and God has merely trifled with his creatures, in annexing them to his law. If they *are to have influence* on mankind; the influence is merely such, as to destroy, or at least lessen, both virtue, and the obligations to it. God, who sees this to be true, if it be truth, has, therefore, in annexing them to his law, and in endeavouring to influence mankind by them, attempted to destroy, or lessen, virtue, and to diminish their obligations to be virtuous.

Further; as without rewards and penalties no law can exist; it is evident, that God cannot make a law, in which he must not, of course, either merely trifle with his creatures, or destroy, or lessen virtue, and diminish their obligations to be virtuous.

The reward, promised to obedience in this and every other law, is happiness; and the punishment threatened to disobedience, is suffering, or misery. To desire the happiness of every rational being, and our happiness, as truly as that of others, is the genuine dictate of virtue; and the indispensable duty of all such beings. It is the duty, then, of every other rational being to desire our happiness; and for this plain reason: *it is in itself desirable.* According to *Lord Shaftsbury*, then, we cannot, without being mean and mercenary, desire that, which all other rational beings are bound to desire, and which in itself is desirable.

*To be virtuous*, is the same thing as *to be meritorious, or to deserve a reward;* and is the only real desert in the universe. The reward which virtue deserves, is such treatment, as is a proper retribution to virtuous conduct; such a kind, and measure, of happiness, as it becomes the wisdom, justice, and goodness, of the lawgiver to communicate, as a proper expression of his approbation of that conduct. To be influenced by a regard to this happiness, although

the very thing which his virtue has deserved, and which God has pronounced to be its proper reward, is, according to this scheme, to become mean, and mercenary, and undeserving of the reward itself. The reward is holden out by God, to encourage his creatures to be virtuous. In doing this, according to *Lord Shaftsbury*, he discourages virtue, and lessens their obligations to be virtuous.

There are *two kinds of original good; enjoyment, and deliverance from suffering;* or, as the case may be, *from the danger of suffering.* These two are the only possible objects of desire to percipient beings; and to Intelligent beings, as truly as any others. When virtue itself is desired, it is desired only for the enjoyment which it furnishes. Were there no such objects in the universe, there would be no such thing as desire; and consequently no such thing as volition, or action. Percipient beings, and, among them, Intelligent beings, would be as absolutely inactive, as so many lumps of matter. But, according to *Lord Shaftsbury, to regard future enjoyment, or misery*, and, for the very same reasons, *to regard them when present*, is to be mean and mercenary, and to cease from being virtuous. He, who regards them, therefore, cannot be virtuous: he, who does not, must of course be a block.

In the mean time, *not to regard enjoyment and suffering, when present to our view, is physically impossible.* In order to be virtuous, then, we must, in every instance, accomplish a physical impossibility.

Finally; *a moral government is entirely founded on motives.* All motives are included in the two kinds of good, mentioned above. In every moral government these motives are presented to the subjects of it, by the law on which it is founded, in the forms of reward and punishment; both necessarily future to obedience, or disobedience. On the influence, which these motives have upon the moral character and conduct of subjects, all moral government rests; nor can any such government exist, for a moment, without them. But to be influenced by them is, in every subject of such government, according to this scheme, mean and mercenary. *God, therefore, in establishing a moral government over intelligent creatures, has directly endeavoured, by his authority, to render them mean and mercenary; and, so far as this influence extends, has prevented them from being virtuous.*

It is, I presume, unnecessary to add any thing further. More striking, or more conclusive, evidence cannot be given of the havoc made by Philosophy in the moral system. If the doctrines of one of her most admired votaries end in these consequences; what absurdities are we not to expect from Philosophers of every inferior order?

# SERMON LXXXI.

REGENERATION.—ITS ATTENDANTS.—BROTHERLY LOVE.

JOHN xiii. 34.—*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.*

IN the three preceding discourses, I have considered *the Nature of Evangelical Benevolence;* and the two principal *Objections against the doctrine, which teaches the existence, and explains the nature of this attribute.* At the present time, I propose to examine *the Last of those characteristics, which were mentioned as Attendants on Regeneration:* viz. *Brotherly Love; or the Love, which is due to the disciples of Christ.*

Commentators have, to a considerable extent at least, considered this command of Christ as merely enjoining benevolence. They observe, that it is called *new*, not because it had not been given before; for, they say, it had been published by *Moses*, and other writers of the Old Testament; but because of its peculiar excellence: remarking, at the same time, that the *Hebrews* customarily denoted the peculiar excellence of a thing *by styling it new.* With this view of the subject I cannot accord. *The command*, given to the Apostles, and by consequence to all the followers of Christ, *to love one another*, was not, in my view, published by *Moses*, nor by any of the succeeding Prophets. Certainly it was not published in form. There is not in the Old Testament, at least I have not been able to find in it, any command, requiring good men to love each other as good men. The general benevolence of the Gospel towards all men, whether friends or enemies, is, indeed, abundantly enjoined both by *Moses* and the prophets. But this benevolence regards men merely as Intelligent beings, capable of happiness; and is itself *the love of happiness*, as heretofore explained. The Love, required in the text, is *the Love of good men, as such;* as the followers of Christ; as wearing his image; as resembling him in their moral character. This Love, in modern language, is called *Complacency*, or *the Love of virtue.* Instead of being Benevolence, it is *a delight in that benevolence;* and is directed not towards *the happiness of Intelligent beings*, but towards *the virtue of good beings.*

A command, enjoining this Love, was, I think, never given in form, before Christ gave it in the text; and was, therefore, *new* in the proper sense at that time. That it is not called new on account of its superior excellence, will be reasonably believed, if we remember, that Christ in no other case applies the epithet in this man-

ner; that the *first and great command of the law* is still more excellent; as is also *the second;* which, while it may be considered as implying this affection, enjoins directly that universal good-will, which is the object of brotherly love, and the voluntary source of all happiness.

"But," it is said, "*St. John* expressly declares this commandment of Christ not to be new in the proper sense." 1 John ii. 7, *Brethren, I write unto you no new commandment; but an old Commandment, which ye had from the beginning.* Without inquiring what *St. John* intends here by the phrase, *from the beginning*, it may be justly observed, that this passage has no reference to the subject in question. The command, of which he speaks, is in the preceding verse expressed in these words: *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* It will not be pretended, that this is the command in the text.

In the *eighth*, that is, the following verse, *St. John* declares the command in the text to be a new commandment. *Again, a new commandment write I unto you.* What the new command is, to which he here refers, is evident from the two following verses. *He that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light; and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* The Apostle does not, indeed, recite any command in form; but, in the phrases, *he that hateth, and he that loveth, his brother*, he shows decisively, that he refers to the command, enjoining this love, and forbidding this hatred; or, in other words, to the command in the text. But the command, to which he refers, he declares to be a new commandment.

There is, however, another passage in this writer, which, at first view, appears to be less easily reconcileable with my assertions. It is this: *And now I beseech thee, Lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.* 2 John 5. That *St. John* here referred to the general benevolence, required in the second command of the moral law, is, I think, clearly evident from the following verse: *And this is love, that we keep his commandments. This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.* The love, of which he had spoken to the Elect lady, in the preceding verse, he himself explains in this. *And this is love, that we keep his commandments.* As if he had said, "The love, which I have mentioned, is the disposition, with which we keep the commandments of God; or, in other words, the general benevolence, enjoined by the law." *St. Paul*, speaking of the same thing, has expressed the same sentiment more clearly, as well as more concisely; Rom. xiii. 10, *Love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Having, as I hope, removed all the objections, of any importance, against the interpretation of the text, adopted above; I shall now proceed to a more particular consideration of this attribute.

I. *Brotherly Love is an affection, differing in many respects from Benevolence.*

Thus, for example, Brotherly Love is confined to good men as its objects: whereas Benevolence extends to all mankind. Brotherly love respects only the moral character of its objects: Benevolence, their existence and capacity. Brotherly Love is the love of the virtue; Benevolence, of the happiness; of those who are loved. Benevolence is virtue absolutely, or universally: Brotherly love is only a branch of that virtue. Benevolence exists, and operates, towards those who have no virtue; and was thus exercised by God towards beings, totally lost and depraved; viz. towards mankind, while wholly under the power of sin. In a similar manner, it is exercised by good men towards sinners; and towards such sinners, as, by being enemies to them on account of their goodness, prove, that there is no goodness in themselves. Brotherly love is exercised, and is capable of being exercised, only towards virtuous men; and towards them, on account of their virtue only. Benevolence, being virtue in the absolute sense, must exist, before it can be loved. Brotherly Love is the love of that Benevolence, or of virtue, after it is known to have existed.

According to these observations we find these affections clearly, and abundantly, distinguished in the Scriptures. Thus Benevolence is called Αγαπη, throughout the New Testament; and, as exercised particularly towards Mankind, is termed Φιλανθρωπια: Acts xxviii. 2. Titus iii. 4. Brotherly love is called Φιλαδελφια: Rom. xii. 10. 1 Thess. iv. 9. Heb. xiii 1. 2 Peter i. 7. Love to the Brethren, or Brotherhood, Αδελφοτης, is enjoined in various places as a peculiar duty. Thus *St. Peter*, in his second Epistle i. 7, says, *Add to your faith virtue, or resolution*, &c.; *to godliness Brotherly Love*, Φιλαδελφιαν; *and to brotherly love charity*, Αγαπην, benevolence. Were Brotherly Love the same with Benevolence, *St. Peter* would certainly not have directed Christians to add Benevolence to itself. Nor would he here have called the same thing by different names, and thus perplexed his readers, merely for the sake of rounding a period.

Other directions generally resembling this, are given us abundantly in the New Testament.

II. *Brotherly Love is the love of Good men.*

To prove this, I observe, that *the Brethren*, spoken of in the New Testament, are always *disciples of Christ*. This name Christ himself gave them in form. In Matt. xii. 46, we are told, that *his mother and his brethren came, desiring to see him.* Upon receiving notice of this fact from one of the company, he replied, *Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Then he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother.* In *Luke* viii. 21, where the same story is recorded, his words are, *My mother and my breth-*

*ren are they, who hear the word of God and do it.* Again, Matt. xxiii. 8, he says, *Be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.*

In these passages, Christ has declared, that his disciples are his brethren; that these are composed of such as hear, and obey, the word of God; and that all such persons sustain this character.

From him the Apostles took this phraseology, and continued it through their writings.

*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed, to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born of many brethren.* Rom. viii. 29.

*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, who are at Colosse.* Col. i. 2.

*I charge you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.* 1 Thess. v. 27.

These passages from *St. Paul*, selected out of a multitude of the same import, are ample proofs, that he used the language of Christ in the same sense. *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, use the same language. It is therefore completely evident, that the Brethren, spoken of appropriately in the New Testament, are Christ's disciples; are saints; are faithful; are holy; are such, as have been sanctified by the Spirit of grace. In this character only are they constituted the objects of Brotherly Love: the character itself being the thing, which, in them, is required by Christ to be loved. It is indeed true, now, as, formerly, that *all who are of Israel are not Israel.* Some, who appear to be Christ's disciples, are not really his disciples. But since our limited minds are unable to distinguish appearance from reality, God has commanded us to govern both our views, and our conduct, by appearance. So long, then, as men appear to be the disciples of Christ, we are bound to regard, and particularly to love, them as his disciples.

III. *Brotherly Love is, therefore, an affection, directed towards the Virtue of those, whom we love:* in other words, it is *Complacency in Virtue.*

In the exercise of Benevolence, we love others, whenever we wish them to be happy; and in this manner we love our enemies, and wicked men universally, however destitute of moral goodness. Our benevolence will, indeed, be particularly exerted in desiring earnestly, that they may become virtuous, in order to their happiness; but we cannot approve, nor love, their moral character; because, by the supposition, it is wholly sinful, and therefore altogether odious.

In the exercise of Brotherly Love, on the contrary, we approve, and love, the moral character of all, whom we love: delighting in their holiness, as an excellent and desirable object. As we approve of the character of Christ himself; so we delight in *them*, as possessing a share of the same beauty and excellence; as *having the same mind, which was also in him.*

IV. *Brotherly Love is, in the Scriptures, constituted a peculiar proof of sanctification.*

In the verse following the text, Christ says, *Hereby shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* Here our Saviour declares this affection to be a peculiar proof to the world, that we are Christians; to be the touchstone, by which his disciples will be examined, and known, by mankind.

Accordingly, the Emperor *Julian* expressly warns the heathen under his dominion, that the Christians contributed not a little to spread Christianity by their singular love to each other, and by their mutual offices of exemplary kindness. At the same time he declares, that, unless the heathen will follow this powerful example, their religion will never prosper. So remarkable, even in that corrupted age, was the Brotherly Love of Christ's disciples, as entirely to distinguish them from the rest of mankind. In other periods of the Church, it has prevailed, as Religion has prevailed; and decayed, as Religion has decayed: but in all ages it has existed, and been discernible, wherever genuine Christianity has been found.

As this attribute is peculiarly the proof of our Religion to others; so it is made equally the proof of it to ourselves. *He that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.* 1 John ii. 9, 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother.* 1 John iii. 10.

*Hereby we know, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that hateth his brother abideth in death.*

These passages teach in the clearest manner, that, if we love the brethren, we are children of God, or the subjects of Evangelical virtue, and that, if we love not the brethren, we are not the children of God. If, then, our love to the brethren be probable; if a good reason exist to believe, that we exercise brotherly love; there exists an equal reason to believe, that *we have passed from death unto life.* If we discover with certainty, that we possess this love; we have arrived at full assurance of our sanctification, and of our title to eternal life.

V. *Brotherly love is universally exercised by Benevolent Minds.*

In other words, every Mind, which is Evangelically benevolent, will of course exercise Brotherly love.

Benevolence is the love of happiness: Brotherly Love is the love of that Benevolence. We love an Intelligent being, as either capable of happiness, or actually the subject of it. When we perceive, that he is benevolent, we further love his benevolence, and him because he is benevolent.

Benevolence is virtue. Brotherly Love, in the abstract denominated Complacency, is the love of virtue. As virtue delights in happiness: so it necessarily delights in the causes of happiness.

But virtue is the only original, voluntary, and supreme, cause of happiness to the universe. Virtue, therefore, delights in virtue, as being the great cause of that, which it supremely loves. As virtue is the voluntary cause of happiness; it is, of course, supremely excellent and lovely; and is accordingly loved by all virtuous beings.

Hence it is evident, that Brotherly Love, although not virtue in the original or abstract sense, is yet an affection eminently virtuous; and is, therefore, strongly enjoined, and greatly commended, in the Scriptures. This is the love, which, without a formal command, David exercised towards *the saints*, whom he styles *the excellent of the earth*, and *in whom*, he says, *was all his delight;* which the captive Psalmist exercised towards *Zion*, the collection of the saints; and sooner than refuse which, he wishes *his right hand may forget its cunning, and his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth.* This is the love, which inspired the Prophets, particularly *Isaiah*, with zeal, and joy, and triumph, when beholding in vision the future prosperity of the Church, and its glorious extension over the habitable world.

*The Distinction between Brotherly Love and Complacency*, generally understood, is this: *the former is exercised by the disciples of Christ towards each other; the latter by all virtuous beings towards all such beings.* This is the love, which God exercises towards all his children; the love, exercised by angels towards those, for whom they cheerfully condescend to be *ministering Spirits;* viz. *those, who shall be heirs of salvation.*

*Towards God*, the complacency of his virtuous creatures is so eminent an exercise of affection, as in a manner to occupy the whole soul. When we remember the moral perfection of God, we are prone to forget his importance as the supreme Intelligent, and the Possessor of supreme happiness; and naturally confine our thoughts to the glorious Excellence of his nature. We love him pre-eminently for this excellence; and scarcely recollect, that he is an object of supreme benevolence. Indeed, whenever the beings loved are wholly virtuous, we are apt to lose our Benevolence in our Complacency; and to be scarcely conscious of any other affection, besides our delight in their excellence of character. When, indeed, we have received peculiar benefits from them, our *Gratitude* is excited; and often powerfully. But our benevolence, though always exercised, is not unfrequently unobserved by our minds.

Thus have I summarily considered this attribute of a sanctified mind. I shall now proceed to derive from this subject a few

## REMARKS.

1st. *If the things, which have been observed concerning this subject, are just; it follows, that we ought carefully to try our moral character by this great scriptural standard.*

By him, who hopes that he is entitled to eternal life, no question can be asked, of higher moment, than whether he is a Christian. To resolve this question, the Scriptures point out no method more obviously, or certainly, effectual, than that, which has been here mentioned. *We know, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* A good man is a peculiar object; and distinct from all others. The materials, of which his goodness is constituted, are generally capable of being truly understood, and strongly realized. If seen, they cannot but be hated by a bad, and loved by a good, mind. Our love and hatred are engaged, almost only, by moral beings. Doctrines, Precepts, and Ordinances, the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, the Word of God, and the things opposed to them, may, indeed, be in a certain sense objects of these affections; but this can exist only in a subordinate degree, and, perhaps, always with a reference to those moral beings, with whom they are connected. Thus the Sabbath is hated, or loved, merely as a season devoted to God, who appointed it. The same observation is equally applicable to other things of the like nature.

But Intelligent beings; viz. God and his rational creatures; we love, or hate, for what they *are*. We love, or hate, them directly; and not for the relation, which they bear to some other object of these affections. Men, particularly, being like or unlike ourselves, of our own party or an opposite, who act, or refuse to act, with or against us, with and against whom *we* act under the strong influence of sympathy, and who are realized by the powerful impressions of sense; are more easily, uniformly, and strongly, regarded with these emotions, in ordinary circumstances, than any other created beings. Our emotions towards them, therefore, are immediate; arise spontaneously; are vigorous; and mingle with all our views, of every kind. Good men love good men of course, and necessarily. Wicked men never exercise complacency towards good men, as such; they often love them with natural affection; or because they are their friends; or because they are useful to them; but not for their characteristical excellence, or for their resemblance to Christ. Good men love them, as the natural taste relishes sweetness or fragrance, the rose or the honeycomb. Good men love them for themselves; for the moral character, which they possess; and independently of all other considerations. Wicked men in their consciences *approve of* goodness, and of good men; and cannot, without violence done to their consciences, disapprove of them. But in this approbation the heart has no share. The hearts of wicked men are radically opposed to virtue; and of course hate it, and, so far as their virtue is concerned, all those by whom it is possessed. Hence have flowed the calumnies, sneers, ridicule, resentment, opposition, and persecution, which good men have received from their enemies ever since the world began.

From these things it is evident, that the love of good men furnishes a criterion, uncommonly well calculated to decide our character, as being either good or evil. Whatever will aid us in a case of such magnitude must be of high importance; and ought to be employed for our benefit with earnestness and fidelity. From the Scriptures, and indeed from the nature of the case also, it is evident, that Brotherly Love furnishes us with peculiar assistance for the determination of a point, so interesting to every Christian. How attentively ought every man, then, and especially every one who hopes, that himself is a Christian, to examine his character by this standard. Let each ask himself, "Do I love good men? Do I love their goodness, their Christianity? Do I choose their company? Do I seek their conversation? Do I delight in their sentiments and conduct? Do I pray for their prosperity, their holiness, and their salvation?" If these questions can be truly answered in the affirmative; we are children of God. If not; we are still *in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity.*

2dly. *From these considerations we discern the peculiar Wisdom and Goodness of Christ in establishing a Church in the world.*

In the Church of Christ the body of good men are gathered together; united in one family; placed in one obvious view; and prepared to render, as well as to receive, Brotherly Love, and all its kind offices. Every affection flourishes by exercise and repetition only. Where the proper objects of our affections are found, they are exercised of course: where such objects are not found, they decay, and die, of themselves. In families, the natural, domestic affections of man find their proper objects. Conjugal love, therefore, parental tenderness, brotherly and sisterly kindness, and filial piety, shoot up here, and thrive, and blossom, and bear fruit; and bear it abundantly.

In the Church, the *family named after Christ*, are assembled the objects of Brotherly Love, or Evangelical Complacency. Here such, as are the subjects of this exalted attribute, find those presented to them, on whom it may be exercised and repeated. Accordingly here, and in the nature of things here only, can this affection live and prosper. Here, on the one hand, virtue is daily seen, approved, and loved; and, on the other, complacency interchanged, strengthened, and enjoyed. While those, who are thus the objects of Love, are by every motive, which can reach a virtuous mind, invited, animated, and compelled, to render themselves more deserving of this affection by improving and adorning those excellencies, which are its immediate objects. Brotherly Love becomes, here, a peculiarly refined and glorious friendship; a bond of perfection, uniting them more and more unto the end. Thus, by the establishment of a Church in the world, has Christ provided for the existence, continuance, and improvement, of this elevated affection. In the mean time, as Brotherly Love exists in this heaven-appointed family; so in the bosom of the same family it

operates, unceasingly, in all the amiable and useful methods, directed by the Scriptures, and pointed to by itself with a magnetic influence. Here it reproves all the variations from truth, all the deviations from rectitude, to which imperfect man, even in his best estate, is liable on this side of the grave. Here it approves, and confirms, every thing that is vindicable and lovely. Here it prays for the strength, amendment, comfort, peace, and joy, of its brethren. Here it weeps with them in their sorrows, rejoices in their joys, and smiles on all their delightful progress in holiness; refines in the view of their refinement, exults in their advancement to immortal life, and expands its wings for the final flight to everlasting glory.

3dly. *This subject forcibly impresses on our minds the Excellence, Glory, and Happiness, of heaven.*

In this apostate and melancholy world, wise men, in all ages, have seen, and felt, that Virtue has been a stranger, a pilgrim, and in many instances an outcast also. Her friends have been few and commonly powerless; her enemies mighty and strong, bitter and distressing; her cause unpopular and hated; her arguments lost in deaf ears; and her entreaties repelled by hearts of marble. It is reasonable, it is desirable, it is "devoutly to be wished," and prayed for, that Virtue may somewhere find a home; a settled residence; a kind welcome; real friends; and final safety. These blessings she has rarely found in this foreign region, this unnatural climate; and, at the best, she has found them but for a moment. Accordingly, she has ever cast her eyes upward, towards another and *better country*. From that country she has received tidings, which cannot deceive, and which assure her of a welcome, and final, reception. She is informed, that there she was born and nursed; and that in this world she is only a visiter and stranger; destined to finish the pilgrimage allotted, and then to return to her native residence, there to dwell for ever. With rapture she has learned, that there all her friends will be finally gathered; and that her Father and everlasting friend is there ready to receive her to the arms of infinite and unchangeable love.

In that glorious world, a vast and immortal Church, formed of those who are all brethren, inhabits the delightful regions, destined to be its eternal residence. In the innumerable millions, of which this great assembly, this nation of brethren, this kingdom of Jehovah, is composed, Brotherly love is the commanding principle of action. In Angels it has glowed, and brightened, ever since the morning of creation dawned over the vast abyss of darkness and solitude. In the general assembly of the first-born it is made a test of their character, and a foundation of their admission into heaven. *Inasmuch as ye have done good unto one of the least of these my brethren*, is by Christ himself announced, as the peculiar term of admission: and *Inasmuch as ye did it not*, as the term of final exclusion. In the cold and dreary region of this world, the spark was

scarcely kindled; and prolonged its existence with difficulty. *The flax*, in which it was kept from final extinction, *smoked* merely, without rising into a flame. But it was never finally *quenched*. At the great examination, it was found still a living spark; and its existence was seen, acknowledged, and proclaimed. Transferred to heaven, it began there to kindle with new and immortal lustre; and was set in that constellated firmament of living and eternal splendours; which are all *glorious* with inherent light, although *one star differeth from another star in glory*.

Of that brilliant world, that region where all things shine, and live, and flourish, and triumph, for ever, the beauty, the glory, the excellence, is eminently this divine affection. All are brethren; all are loved as brethren. All are divinely amiable and excellent friends. Every one possesses the virtue, which is loved; and the complacency, by which it is loved. Every one, conscious of unmingled purity within, approves, and loves, himself for that divine image, which in complete perfection, and with untarnished resemblance, is instamped on his character. Each, in every view which he casts around him, beholds the same glory shining, and brightening, in the endless train of his companions: One in nature, but diversified without end, in those forms and varieties of excellence, by which the original and eternal Beauty delights to present itself to the virtuous universe. Here every one, conscious of being entirely lovely, and entirely loved, reciprocates the same love to that *great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues*, and which fills the immeasurable regions of heaven. Out of this character grows a series ever varying, ever improving, of all the possible communications of beneficence, fitted in every instance only to interchange, and increase the happiness of all. In the sunshine of Infinite complacency, the light of the New Jerusalem, the original source of all their own beauty, life, and joy, all these happy *nations walk* for ever; and, transported with the life-giving influence, unite in one harmonious and eternal hymn to the great Author of their enjoyment: *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.* Amen.

# SERMON LXXXII.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—ADOPTION

1 JOHN iii. 2.—*Beloved, now we are the sons of God.*

IN a series of discourses, I have considered *the Attendants of Regeneration:* viz. *Faith*, formerly explained; *Repentance; Love to God; Love to Mankind; and Brotherly Love.* I shall now proceed, according to the scheme formerly proposed, to examine *the Consequences of this Change of character.*

Of these, the first in the natural order is *Adoption.* That Adoption is a Consequence of Regeneration will not be denied. The observations, which I shall make concerning the subject, will be included under the following heads:

I. *The Nature;*

II. *The Reality;*

III. *The Importance;* and,

IV. *The Consequences; of Adoption.*

I. *The Nature of Adoption may be explained in the following manner.*

*A Child is, in this act, taken by a man from a family, not his own; introduced into his own family; regarded as his own child; and entitled to all the privileges and blessings, belonging to this relation.* To adopt children in this manner has, it is well known, been a custom, generally prevailing in all ages, and probably in all nations. Thus children were adopted among the *Egyptians, Jews, Romans,* and other ancient nations; and the same custom exists in the *Christian nations of Europe; in our own Country; among the American Aborigines;* and, so far as my knowledge extends, throughout the world.

Of the same general nature is that transaction, in divine economy, by which mankind become the children of God.

II. *The Reality of Adoption may be thus illustrated.*

Mankind are originally strangers to the family of God; enemies to him, to his law, to his kingdom, and to all his interest. From this situation they are invited to come, and enter into his family; to take his name upon them; to share in his parental care, tenderness, and blessings. Such of them as comply with the invitation, are received into his family; and become entitled to his parental Love, and all the offices of affection to which it gives birth. From this period, they are styled the children of God. From this period, they are permitted, and required to address him as their Father; a character, which he has been pleased to assume; and to consider

themselves as his children; and as entitled to the character of his children.

Of this subject the Scriptures give us the following exhibition.

1st. *God announced the adoption of mankind into his family soon after the Apostacy.*

At the birth of *Enos*, we are told, that *men began to call upon the name of the Lord.* In the margin, and, as it would seem, with greater correctness, *men began to be called by the name of the Lord:** that is, they began to be called his children, and to take upon themselves the name of God, as being now their parent; just as adopted children take upon themselves the names of those human parents, by whom they have been adopted. The style, by which they began to be known at this early period, has been continued through every succeeding age of the Church. In Gen. vi. 1, 2. we read of *the sons of God.* These, I apprehend, are persons of the same class with those, who, in the time of *Enos*, *began to be called by the name of the Lord;* and were now publicly designated by this title. That such persons were meant by the phrase, *the sons of God*, is sufficiently manifest from the use of it elsewhere. In Job i. 6, it is said, *the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord:* and in Job xxxviii. 7, that, at the creation, *the Morning Stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* In these passages, Angels are undoubtedly the persons intended. When mankind, in those early days, received the same appellation, it was designed to indicate, that they belonged to the same family, and were by adoption, children of the same heavenly Parent.

In the communications, made by God to *Abraham* and his family, the same scheme is more particularly and explicitly pursued. God, in the covenant of grace, declared to this earthly *father of the faithful, I will be your God; and ye shall be my people:* phraseology, exactly equivalent, in the mouth of the Speaker, to the following: *I will be your Father; and ye shall be my children.* In conformity to this scheme, *Moses* was directed, Ex. iv. 22, to preface his message from God to *Pharaoh*, with *Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born.* In the same manner, *Moses* declared the same relation, Deut. xiv. 1, *Ye are the children of the Lord your God.* In Ps. lxxxii. 6, it is said to the rulers of *Israel*, *All of you are Children of the Most High.* In the latter days of their kingdom, when they had become deeply depraved, they were still called by the title of children. Thus they are styled *rebellious children; corrupters; lying children, that will not hear the word of the Lord.*

By the Prophet *Hosea* it was again predicted, that *they should be called the Sons of God* when gathered again, after their dispersion. *It shall be said of them, Ye are the Sons of the living God.*

* Taylor.

This character, thus insisted on through the several ages of the *Jewish Church*, is more particularly, and strongly insisted on in the *New Testament*. Here the important fact of our Adoption is declared in the most explicit manner, and in a great variety of forms. In Eph. i. 5, it is said, that Christians *were predestinated unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to God, according to the good pleasure of his will.* Agreeably to this determination, it is declared, John i. 12, that *to as many as received Christ, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them who believe on his name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* To persons of this character *St. Paul* says, *But ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* These passages are amply sufficient to show the Scriptural views of the reality of Adoption. It would be useless, therefore, to quote a multitude of others, of similar import.

2dly. *The same doctrine is forcibly taught in the ordinance of Baptism.*

The ordinance of Baptism is a solemn symbol of Regeneration. By the affusion of the water upon every subject of this ordinance is exhibited, in a very affecting manner, the effusion of the Spirit of Grace upon his heart; and by the cleansing influence of the water, the purification of his soul by the blood of Christ. In the administration of this ordinance, every subject of it *is baptized*, by the command of Christ, εις το ονομα, *into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* In this manner, baptism is a direct exhibition of our Adoption into the family of God, and our rightful assumption of the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, Christians are, in the Scriptures, entitled, after these names, *Godly*, *Christian*, and *Spiritual.* The ordinance, it is true, is, as from the nature of the case it must be, external and symbolical. But the symbol is easy, intelligible, and plainly indicative of the adoption of Christians into *the family, which is named after Christ.*

III. *The Importance of Adoption may be illustrated from the following considerations.*

1st. *The act of Adoption produces a real relation in us to God.*

In reading the Scriptures, a book so fraught with figurative language, it is no unnatural, and, I believe, not a very uncommon, thing, for persons to regard whatever is said on this subject, as a mere collection of fine phraseology, intended to express, with strength and beauty, the dignity of the Christian's character, and the desirableness of his situation; and not to denote a real and important part of the scheme of Redemption. This, however, is an erroneous mode of thinking concerning the subject. We are, in fact, strangers to the Divine Family; and have ceased to be, in any sense, useful to ourselves, and dutiful children of God. We have allied ourselves voluntarily to strangers, and *become aliens*

*from the commonwealth of* the spiritual *Israel*. In this manner, we have wandered, and remained, far off from God; and, but for his mercy, employed to bring us back, had widened our distance from his house and favour for ever. In this situation, we were related to him, only as froward and rebellious creatures; and were objects, only of his eternal indignation. But when we are adopted into his family, we become his children anew; are acknowledged as such; and shall be treated as such throughout eternity. The act by which we are adopted, and which creates this relation, is also a publication of it to the Universe; solemnly announcing to all the subjects of the divine kingdom, that henceforth we are regarded by God as his children; that he will be *a father to us;* and that we *shall be his sons and daughters;* that the name, the duties, and the privileges, of children, will henceforth be rightfully ours.

2dly. *This relation is very near, and very interesting.*

In the original condition of mankind they stood related to God by creation and preservation. This, considered as the state of Intelligent beings, is a relation of high and interesting importance. *Adam* accordingly, on account of this relation, is, together with the angels, dignified with the title of *a Son of God.* See Luke iii. 38.

This relation is often insisted on with much magnificence by the ancient heathen Sages; who exhibited their views of it in a variety of bold and strong images. Particularly, they represented the soul of man as an emanation from God; as a part of the divine mind; separated for a season, to return again, and be reabsorbed by the original Source of perfection; as a beam of divine light; a particle of ethereal fire; sent forth from the uncreated Sun, to be re-united hereafter to its parent Orb. It will be easily seen from these representations, what stress they laid upon our divine original; and it will be not less easily seen, that the more perfect views of the Original Mind, furnished by the Scriptures, enhance exceedingly the honour, and importance, derived to us from this source.

But though it is honourable to an Intelligent being, that God was pleased to bring him into existence, and endow him with such noble faculties; yet, in the Adoption of the Covenant of Grace, a much nearer, dearer, and more exalted, relation is formed, and finished. In this proceeding, God takes rebels, sinners, and outcasts, and with immense exertions, and with means most wonderful, brings them back into his family and favour. They were before created, and preserved: now they are redeemed, sanctified, and forgiven. An act of creative power was before exerted, to bring them into being; and of preserving power, to continue them in being; but now Christ has been made man; has lived, suffered, and died; has descended into the grave; risen again; sat down at the right hand of God; and begun an eternal intercession; that they may be restored to the character of children, and to the bless-

ings which flow from infinite love. The Spirit of God has, also, with infinite condescension, patience, and kindness, sanctified, enlightened, quickened, and purified, them unto the end. The Father of Spirits has formed, and completed, a new dispensation in the Universe, a dispensation of grace and forgiveness, for their sakes; has forgiven and justified them; and re-admitted them to his kingdom and everlasting love. These are all new, great, and glorious things; things, which have been done for no other.

Correspondent with the degree of that, which is done, or suffered, by any Intelligent being for any other, is their mutual love. He, for whom most is done, and to whom most is forgiven, will naturally love the most. This is directly taught by Christ in his parable of the two debtors, recorded Luke vii. 40.: *And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; and he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence; the other, fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered, and said, I suppose, he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.* In proportion, then, to what has been done for the redeemed, will be their love, and the cause of it also, throughout eternity.

On the other hand, he, who does, or suffers, much for others, loves them, also, in proportion to what he has done and suffered. This truth is abundantly evident in all human concerns. A father loves his child, when sick, and distressed, and needing much at his hands, more tenderly, than those of his children, who are healthy and prosperous. A friend, in the like circumstances, loves his friend more than before; and a patriot his country.

The same doctrine is also taught by Christ, in *the parables of the ten pieces of silver*, and *the hundred Sheep;* and is appealed to by *St. Paul* in that memorable passage: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?* But God has done more, Christ has suffered more, *for the Redeemed*, than has been done, or suffered, for any others. Of course they are loved more, in proportion to their importance in the Universe, than any others. For this, as one reason, *there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.* The fact, that they have been once *lost*, and have been *found* again; that they have been once *dead*, and *live* anew; and that their restoration has been accomplished by so much exertion and suffering; will render this event an object of peculiar interest, and them objects of peculiar tenderness, throughout eternity.

Thus the Redeemed are brought into a near relation to God; nearer than that of mere Intelligent creatures, in proportion to the greatness of the things, which have been done, and suffered, to bring it into being.

3dly. *This relation is eternal.*

Those, who are once redeemed, sustain this character for ever. The song, which ascribes *blessing, and honour, and glory, to the Lamb who was slain, and who hath redeemed us to God by his blood*, is begun in the present world, and continued throughout all its successive ages. But it does not terminate here. It is renewed in heaven; and will be continued throughout its everlasting duration. In that happy world, they will be joint heirs with Christ to *the inheritance, which is undefiled, and fadeth not away.* There they will *behold his glory*, even *the glory which he had with the Father before ever the world was.* Throughout their interminable existence they will ever sustain the peculiar character of Redeemed creatures; will be regarded by God, and the virtuous universe, as the trophies of Christ's Mediation, as monuments of forgiving and sanctifying Love. In this character they will regard themselves; and will feel its import with a gratitude, suited to the greatness of the blessings, which they have received.

It is this consideration, which stamps the peculiar value on the relation in question. All that is temporary and perishable is, in its nature, comparatively of little importance. Time, necessarily fading in itself, imparts its own character to every thing under its dominion. The remembrance, that an enjoyment will come to an end, embitters it, even while it is in possession; and after a period, which must soon arrive, it will be destroyed for ever. No possession therefore, ought ever to engage the ardent attachment of an immortal mind, unless made sure by the seal of eternity.

4thly. *This relation will become more and more interesting for ever.*

The mind, which is received into heaven through the mediation of the Redeemer, will more and more understand the nature of the blessings, to which it has been admitted. From the sufferings of those who are lost, it will learn the greatness of the evils from which itself has been delivered; and, from their obstinate continuance in sin, the hopeless nature of its own former state, had it not been for the atonement of Christ, and the sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit. In the happiness of heaven it will see, and feel, the vastness, and multitude, of the enjoyments to which it has been introduced; and in the perfection and loveliness of itself, and of all its companions, the transcendent excellence of that character, which was mercifully begun in it here, to be improved for ever. In proportion as its views of these subjects expand, it will discern, more and more clearly, the importance of those wonderful things, which have been done to deliver it from endless sin and misery, and to instate it in endless virtue and happiness. In this manner it will advance continually, together with all glorified saints, towards the comprehension of what *is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth; and will more and more know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.* As the sense of these divine subjects increases

in the heart, its admiration, complacency, and gratitude, will rise continually higher; its beauty and amiableness daily increase; and itself become daily a more delightful object of the divine approbation.

IV. *The Consequences of Adoption are great and desirable.*

I have observed above, that the relation, produced by this event, is real. Every real relation involves real rights and obligations; duties to be performed on our part; and on the part of God, blessings, to the communication which he has been pleased to oblige himself by his own gracious promises. The relation, introduced into existence by the act of Adoption between him and his redeemed children, involves in its consequences a long train of rights and obligations, duties and blessings. Of these a few only can be mentioned at the present time; and even these must be mentioned in a summary manner.

The consequences of Adoption respect either the present world, or the world to come.

In the present world, God

1st. *Provides Sustenance for his children.*

God provides for the wants of all creatures; not only for mankind, but for animals. *The young lions seek their meat from God, and he satisfieth the young ravens, when they cry.* But the provision which he makes for the wants of his Children, is distinguished from that which he makes for others, by this important consideration: that *it is exactly that which is best for them.* In kind, in degree, in manner, it is just such as most promotes their real welfare. Were any difference to exist in their circumstances; had they more, or had they less; or were their supplies to be varied in any other manner; or were their situation, in this respect, to be at all different from what it actually is; their true interest would be less perfectly consulted. *All things*, in this respect, *work together for the good of them that love God; and they that seek the Lord do not want any good thing.*

The provision made for them, differs also from that made for their fellow-men, in another important particular. They are assured by his promise, that *this provision will always be made for them*, while they live. They have, therefore, an indefeasible right to expect all the blessings of this nature, which they need; a right founded on the unchangeable covenant of grace; on *the truth of God, which is as the great mountains, stedfast and immoveable; and on his promises, which endure for ever.* Every one of them may, therefore, say with David, *The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*

Finally; there is yet another difference between the provision, made for their wants, and that made for others; viz. *that the good furnished to them is a series, not of enjoyments merely, but of blessings.* As such, they are not only permitted, but required, to regard

them. They may, therefore, without fear or danger, partake of them as such; and relish entirely whatever comfort they convey. They are sweetness without a sting; fragrance without a thorn, planted beneath to embitter the enjoyment. The pleasure, which they contain, is also enhanced unceasingly by the delightful emotion of gratitude, with which they are always attended.

2dly. *He protects them.*

The exposure of mankind, from the cradle to the grave, to evil in an endless variety of forms, even when the danger is wholly unseen and unimagined, has ever been the favourite topic of the moralist, and a standing dictate of all human experience. Every day instructs us, that against this exposure no human foresight can effectually provide. *Except the Lord keep the city, the* most diligent *watchman waketh in vain. But he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* Of his children *the Lord is the keeper. The Lord is their shade upon their right hand. The sun shall not smite them by day, nor the moon by night; the Lord shall preserve them from all evil; he shall preserve their souls. The Lord shall preserve their going out, and their coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore. Therefore, when they pass through the waters, he will be with them, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow them: when they walk through the fire, they shall not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon them.* In all the situations of life, his *eye is upon them for good. They* may *fall*, indeed, because it is necessary, because it is best, for them; *yet they shall rise again, and shall not be utterly cast down.* At the same time, means of defence will be provided for them, in seasons apparently hopeless, and in ways utterly unexpected. Enemies are restrained; evils averted; dangers dissipated; friends raised up; the course of Providence changed; and thus, even when they are *encompassed with the terrors of death, and the snares of hell, God is their fortress, their high tower, the Rock of their Salvation.*

3dly. *He Instructs them.*

This work he accomplishes by his providence, by his word, by his ordinances, by his ministers, by the life and conversation of Christians, by the divine example of his Son, and by the peculiar communications of his Spirit. In all these ways, He furnishes them with whatever knowledge, and whatever useful impressions, they need to receive; and trains them up as children, in the effectual preparation for the perfect state of manhood, to which they will arrive in his heavenly kingdom.

This, however, is the peculiar office of the Spirit of truth. As he originally revealed the truth of God concerning our salvation; so, throughout their earthly pilgrimage, he discloses to the children of God the divine import of his own instructions, and gives them eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand and obey, his own glorious precepts. He teaches them the true, Evangelical use of religious ordinances, of trials, of afflictions, and of blessings;

dissolves their doubts; removes their perplexities; shows them the path of life; takes them by the hand, and guides them through the mazes of this earthly wilderness to the heavenly Canaan. All those, who are the Sons of God, are, as St. Paul teaches us, *led by the Spirit of God.* By him they are kept from all fatal ignorance, and from every ruinous error.

4thly. *He corrects them.*

Of this necessary and benevolent parental office *St. Paul* gives us a detailed account in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he, whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? For they, verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby.*

In the account, here given by the Apostle, concerning the correction of such as are adopted, summary as it is, we have a complete view of all that is most interesting in this subject. We are taught particularly, that correction is a distinctive privilege of God's children; that those who are not corrected, are not his children; that we are always corrected with an intention to do us good, and not arbitrarily, nor wantonly; that for this reason, as well as on account of the prerogatives and perfections of God, we are bound to receive our corrections with reverence, submission, patience, and fortitude; that the end for which we are corrected is, that we may be made *partakers of his holiness, and live;* and that, if we receive our corrections in this manner, they will *yield us the peaceable fruits of righteousness*, and thus terminate in our immortal life.

The corrections, which God administers to his children, are administered in the reproofs, alarms, and threatenings, of his word and ordinances, and the chastisement of his providence; and generally in all their distresses. By these they are checked in their downward progress of sense and sin; warned of approaching danger; quickened to more vigorous efforts in their duty; weaned from the world; and by degrees prepared for heaven.

5thly. *In the future world, He provides for them a glorious Inheritance.*

Affectionate parents, in the present world, not only prepare their children to live usefully, by giving them a proper education, but to live comfortably, by furnishing them, when it is in their

power, with sufficient means of subsistence. God, in the same manner, takes a parental care of his own children, and provides the means of enabling them to live happily for ever. To this end, he renders them perfectly holy; and thus furnishes them with dispositions, in possession of which they can live happily; dispositions, which prepare them to be useful, amiable, honourable; esteemed, and loved by all wise and good beings; particularly by himself; dispositions, which ensure them peace of mind, self-approbation, and the consciousness of being excellent and lovely. To a mind thus purified and exalted, he unites a body, spiritual, incorruptible, glorious, and immortal; the proper tenement of so noble an inhabitant. Thus formed, and perfected, he removes them to his heavenly kingdom, and there places them in circumstances, and amid companions, of such a nature, as to enable them to improve in knowledge, excellence, honour, and happiness, for ever.

# SERMON LXXXIII.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—SANCTIFICATION.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 23.—*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.*

HAVING considered, in the preceding discourse, *the Nature, Reality, Importance*, and *Consequences of Adoption*, I shall now proceed to the next subject of inquiry, in a theological system; viz. *Sanctification*. That this is a consequence of Regeneration is too obvious to every one, who reads his Bible, to be questioned.

The word *Sanctify*, used in the text, and elsewhere in the Scriptures abundantly, is employed to denote *two things*, which are commonly and properly, made distinct objects of consideration in Moral science: *the Act of Regenerating man*, or making him holy in the first instance; and *the Combination of all successive Acts, of a similar nature, by which man is improved in holiness through life*. It is scarcely necessary to be observed, that the latter of these subjects will now be the theme of investigation.

The text is a prayer of *St. Paul*, for the Sanctification of the *Thessalonian* Christians. As he prays, that they *may be wholly sanctified;* it is evident, that they were sanctified in part only, at their Regeneration; and at the time also, in which this prayer was uttered. It is further evident, that they were to be sanctified in a still greater degree; because this event is prayed for by the Apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The reality of this work is, thus, completely evident from the text; and is indeed so generally acknowledged by Christians, that it would be superfluous to attempt a proof of it, at the present time. I shall, therefore, proceed directly to the consideration of this subject under the following heads:

I. *The Agent;*

II. *The Instruments;* and,

III. *The Process; of Sanctification.*

I. *The Agent in our sanctification is the Spirit of God.*

This truth is amply declared in the Scriptures. *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit.* 2 Thess. ii. 13. *Elect*, says *St. Peter, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.* 1 Pet. i. 2. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Cor, vi. 14.

The most extensive and complete account, however, which is given us of this subject in the Scriptures, is contained in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*. Here Christians are said *not to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit: to be under the law of the Spirit of life: to be after the Spirit: to mind the things of the Spirit: to be spiritually minded;* and thus to possess *life and peace: to have the Spirit dwelling in them: to be led by the Spirit;* which to them becomes *the Spirit of adoption;* that is, *the Spirit* by which they *are children of God, and cry unto him Abba, Father: to have the witness of the Spirit: to have the first fruits of the Spirit: to have the assistance of the Spirit in their prayers:* and, universally, to be under his guidance, and influence, through the whole Christian life.

The same agency indeed, like that which was exerted in the creation of the world, and like the divine agency generally considered, is attributed to the Godhead universally; to the Father; and to the Son. The text is an example of the first of these forms of ascription. *The very God of peace sanctify you wholly!* Of the second we have an instance in the beginning of the Epistle of *St. Jude. Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.* Of the last of these forms of ascription we have a specimen in 1 Cor. i. 30, *Jesus Christ, who unto us, of God, is become wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:* and another in Heb. ii. 11, *For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*

The reason, why this work is thus differently ascribed, is, that it is considered in these canonical discourses, in different manners, and with relation to different objects.

*By the Father* we are sanctified, as we are chosen by him unto sanctification, as by his good pleasure, and free grace, the atonement of Christ, and the sanctifying agency of the Spirit, exist. *By the Son* we are sanctified, as his death is the only means by which we ever become holy: and by which the Spirit came into the world, for the benevolent purpose of making us holy. *By the Spirit* we are sanctified, as the immediate Agent in applying to us the blessings of Christ's Redemption; particularly in renewing, and purifying, our hearts and lives.

Thus, although this work is immediately performed by the Spirit, as the proper Agent; yet we are truly, though more remotely, said to be sanctified by the Father, by the Son, and by the Godhead universally considered.

*The manner in which this work is performed in the mind of man,* must, like other questions concerning the Agency of Intelligent beings, remain in a great measure concealed from such minds as ours. My observations concerning it will, therefore, be very few. In my own view, the work of sanctification, so far as the Agent is

concerned, is no other, than a repetition of the same agency, by which we are regenerated. *Our regeneration*, according to my own apprehensions, *is accomplished*, as I mentioned at large in a former discourse, *by the communication to our minds of a new relish for divine things. Our Sanctification, as distinguished from it, consists, supremely, in enhancing this relish; in rendering it more intense, more uniform, more vigorous, and universally more operative.* The communication of this relish, or disposition, makes us holy at first; or in our regeneration. Subsequent communications, of the same nature, render us more and more holy afterwards. As the *effect*, in both cases, is the same; it cannot be reasonably doubted, that the *cause* is the same; nor that *it operates* in the same manner. If this disposition is, in the mind, the source of holy volitions, and virtuous conduct; the stronger, the more prevalent, it is at any succeeding period, the more virtuous will be the life.

II. *The Instruments of our Sanctification are generally the Word and Providence of God.*

*The Word of God* is the means of our sanctification in all cases, in which it contributes to render us better; whether it be read, heard, or remembered; whether it be pondered with love, reverence, wonder, and delight, or whether, with similar affections, it be faithfully obeyed; whether its instructions and impressions be communicated to us directly, or through the medium of divine ordinances, or the conversation, or the communion, or the example, of our fellow-christians. In all these cases, the thing which is seen, which is illustrated, which is exemplified, which is in any manner brought home to the heart, and thus rendered the means of improving us in virtue, is no other than the Word of God; however numerous, or however diversified, the modes are, in which it is presented to the mind.

As the Word of God is loved by a regenerated mind; it is easily discernible, that its influence on such a mind will be very different from that, which existed in the preceding state, commonly termed the state of nature.

Particularly, the Scriptures will be more frequently and extensively read. A book, which we love, is often taken up; is often perused, and dwelt upon, with pleasure. Such a book, therefore, will be much more thoroughly studied, and extensively understood, than one which is disrelished. It is, also, now more highly reverenced; and for this reason, will be more read, and better known.

Its instructions and precepts, at the same time, coincide with the great scheme of moral conduct, formed by the mind; as its only general directory; harmonizing with its views, affections, aims, and determinations. They are, therefore, welcomed as means of light; as objects of complacency; as sanctions of favourite de-

signs; and as guides, aids, and motives, to a life, chosen and loved.

The Scriptures are also regarded by such a mind, as being, in a proper sense, *the Word of God*; of Him, by whom itself was created; under whose law and government it is placed; to whom all its duty is originally owed; and to whom it is, of course, answerable for all its conduct. Thus considered, the Scriptures appear, to such a mind, invested with Infinite authority, conveying supreme obligation, and rightfully controlling the heart, and the life. With an efficacy, still more peculiar, are they regarded as the Word of the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier, of man: as the Word of a forgiving God; of a Redeemer, dying for its own sins; of that infinitely Benevolent Spirit, who is its own Sanctifier. Under these titles, the most venerable, and the most endearing, which the universe has ever known, God speaks in his Word to every Christian with a power, which nothing can equal, with a tenderness and endearment, to which there is no parallel. Whatever he utters, is not the prescription of a perfect Creator and Lawgiver only; but the counsel and pleasure, also, of *a Father, and an everlasting Friend:* infinitely the most faithful and useful of all friends; infinitely the most venerable and affectionate of all parents. From such a Source what counsel, what command, what persuasion, will not completely influence, and control, the heart of filial piety?

Finally; the Scriptures are regarded by such a mind, as *containing all things* necessary *to life, and to godliness.* The precepts are an ample summary of all the directions necessary for our practice; the ordinances, for our worship; and the instructions, for our faith, and the prudent conduct of our religious life. The mind resorts to them, therefore, as to a complete compend of all the directions, which it needs, or ever can need, in the present world. Every thing, which it contains, is right; is sufficient; is decisive. To every thing it yields, therefore, with implicit confidence; and, whatever may be the rules which it finds here, is satisfied, and safe.

*The Providence of God* becomes the means of our sanctification in all the ways, in which it makes solemn and religious impressions on the mind. The great, majestic, and awful events, which take place in the creation around us, excite strongly *admiration* and *reverence* towards that glorious Being, who holds the universe in his hands, and controls all its beings and events with such amazing power and wisdom. The order and harmony, with which all things move to their proper ends; the succession of *summer and winter, seed-time and harvest;* and the *terrible things*, which God *does in righteousness, when his judgments are abroad in the earth;* awaken in the soul of the Christian most affecting views of the divine government; of its vastness, its comprehensiveness; its astonishing grandeur; and its unvarying opposition to iniquity.

The dispensations of God to his Church are a most impressive source of religious thoughts, and affections, to the Christian. These are all dispensations, involving the peculiar interests of his own brethren; his chosen friends; with whom he ever *weeps, when they weep; and rejoices, when they rejoice.* These display also, in a manner wholly peculiar, and, although often obscure, mysterious, and even perplexing, yet, if it be not his own fault, always interesting and profitable, the most venerable and endearing attributes of his heavenly Father. Every Christian will easily recollect, that, in the history of God's Providence towards the disciples of Christ, in their sufferings and deliverances, their exposure and protection, the communications made to them of grace, mercy, and peace, their consequent exemplary faith, their hope and joy, their victory and triumph, their edifying life and their peaceful death, he has found means of improvement, alway touching his heart, and contributing in an eminent degree to amend his life. Here he has found his doubts and fears, his stupidity and sloth, his murmurings and backslidings, most efficaciously improved; his faith and fortitude, his reverence and submission, his hope, and love, and joy, unusually strengthened. From accounts of these things he has risen to more fervent prayers, more ardent praises, more vigorous resolutions, and more faithful obedience. What is true of these things, existing in other times, and other countries, is equally true of the same things, as they respect the Christians around him. Here the events are brought before his eyes; and are presented to him with the force, possessed only by the immediate objects of sense. The truth, here, may be no more satisfactorily exhibited; but the impression, made by it, is necessarily enhanced. A deeper interest is, therefore, naturally felt; more lasting traces are impressed on the memory; and a more powerful influence is diffused over the life. All the happy effects, derived from the preceding source, flow, therefore, from this with a more intense and controlling efficacy.

But, above all, the dispensations of God to himself, and to his family, are the most strongly realized, and most regularly directed to his own spiritual improvement, by the renewed man. These are all more perfectly understood; come more immediately to the heart; and operate with a more commanding influence on the life. In these he is taught by the finger of God, as a child trained to his service, and fitted by degrees for eternal glory. *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

It will be remembered, that to both these sources of improvement in the divine life, the heart of the Christian is opened by the disposition, which he receives in Regeneration. It will be remembered, that he regards them all with a taste, a relish, congenial to them; that he beholds them with enlightened eyes; that he applies himself to them with unceasing diligence: that he considers

this application to them as his indispensable duty, and his pre-eminent interest. All of them, therefore, operate upon his understanding, affections, and life, in a manner unknown by other men: and, where sinners would experience nothing but dulness, distrust, murmuring, and opposition, he cannot fail to find, for these reasons, the most efficacious means of rendering him wiser, and better, and happier.

III. *The Process of Sanctification may be summarily exhibited in the following manner.*

1st. *It is progressive through life.*

The first sanctifying act of the Spirit of God is employed in *regenerating* the soul. Succeeding acts, of the same nature, are employed in *purifying* it, through all the successive periods of life. All these acts are, I apprehend, of exactly the same nature; and differ from each other in no other respect, except that the *regenerating act is first*, and *the sanctifying acts*, as they are termed, *are successive to it.* All, united, constitute that, which in the Scriptures, and often in the common use of language, is called *the Work of Sanctification.* But as there is frequent occasion to distinguish the first act from the others, we customarily term *this the renewing, or regenerating, act;* and sometimes *Regeneration*, and *Renovation;* and denote *the succeeding acts* by the words *Sanctifying*, and *Sanctification.* All, however, are, in my view, exactly of the same nature. The *Agent* is the same: his *agency* is the same: and the *effects* are the same. The reason, why the first act is thus distinguished, is, that the change from sin to holiness is an event so remarkable, so wonderful, so new in the Providence of God. The future changes from one degree of holiness to another, although really wonderful, are less so; and less contrary to rational hope. They are, therefore, grouped together in the Scriptures, and in common language, under the one general name of Sanctification. These acts, as I have observed, continue through life. Under the influence of them, and with the aid of those means, which are appointed for this purpose in the divine government, the Christian *grows in wisdom, and in grace*, to the end.

*To aim at this progress* is accordingly made the duty, and described as the character, of a good man, throughout the Scriptures. *This one thing I do*, saith *St. Paul, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Phil. iii. 13. *Beware*, says *St. Peter, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.* 2 Pet. iii. 18. *Besides this*, says the same apostle, *giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and*

*to brotherly kindness, charity.—For, if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.* 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, 10.

2dly. *This process is not uniform.*

By this I intend, that it is not the same in manner, or degree, every day, month, or year. In the religious life of *St. Paul*, as we are informed, *the law of the members* prevailed at times; and, at times, *the law of the mind.* In that of *David*, and that of *Hezekiah*, as well as that of *Solomon*, sin, at particular seasons, appears evidently to have triumphed throughout considerable periods.

When we remember the nature and circumstances of men, this fact will be far from appearing wonderful. The nature of man is in many respects various. From whatever cause it arises, our views are at times brighter, our vigilance more active, our resolution stronger, our temper more serene, and our energy more vigorous, than at other times. This is visible in all that we speak, or think, or do, whatever may be the objects of our attention. That a state of things in us, which so materially affects ourselves, in our very nature, should have an important influence on our religious interests, is to be expected of course. The changes are here wrought in ourselves; and *we*, the persons thus changed, are those, whose religion is concerned. As *we* are changed, therefore, the state of our religion must, in a greater or less degree, be changed also. When our minds are bright, and prepared to take bright views of any subject of contemplation; their views of Religion will naturally be bright. When our affections are in a general state of ardour; our love to divine things will naturally be vigorous; as well as our hatred to sin and temptation. When our resolution is generally firm; we shall naturally be *steadfast and immoveable in the work of the Lord.* On the contrary, when our apprehension is dull and heavy, our spirits low, and our resolution timid and wavering; all our efforts will be poor, feeble, and in a great measure fruitless. Our views will be obscure; our affections will lag; and our progress will either not exist at all, or be slow, heavy, and discouraging.

Sometimes, also, we are beset by more numerous and more powerful temptations. Snares are set for us with greater art, and secrecy. Sophistry, more plausible and seducing, is employed to warp our principles, affections, and conduct. Obstacles, apparently insurmountable, block up our way. Discouragements, terrifying, and at seasons overwhelming, daunt our resolution. The inducements to backsliding come upon us suddenly; find us off our guard; and overpower us, before we summon either our understanding, or our principles, to our aid.

At the same time, our advantages for improvement in the Christian life are, at some times, far less, and less productive of safety and improvement, than at others. Our peculiar and most useful friends, those who best understand our character, wants, and dangers, are sometimes removed from us to such a distance, that we cannot en-

joy their counsels, reproof, consolations, or example. We are prevented from uniting with them in the public or private ordinances of the Gospel; and are deprived of the peculiar blessings of intimate Christian communion.

At times also, we are peculiarly unfaithful to ourselves, and to God; are less watchful; less prayerful; less strenuous in our opposition to temptation, and in the performance of our duty. The world lays stronger hold on our affections. We venture on forbidden ground; draw near to the objects of seduction; become fascinated with charms, before undiscovered, and overpowered by combinations of harmony, fragrance, beauty, and splendour, of sprightliness, gayety, and joy; or alarmed by an assemblage of enemies, dangers, and terrors, of contempt, shame, and ridicule; so as to be *enticed* to sin on the one hand, and *terrified* into it on the other.

At other periods, most of these things are reversed. Time, at these seasons, rolls on, to us, with brighter mornings, with more unclouded days, with more serene evenings; and nights with more undisturbed tranquillity and peaceful repose. At such seasons, our views of all divine subjects are clearer, and more just. Our affections are more alive; our aims more noble, unmixed, and heavenly; our resolution more vigorous and uniform; our conduct more approved in its progress, and followed, in review, by purer peace and self-approbation. God also, for reasons wholly unknown to us, or imperfectly comprehended by us, sometimes withdraws the light of his countenance, and the blessings of his Spirit; sometimes communicates these and other blessings more uniformly and abundantly; and generally regulates his providence towards us in such a manner, that we are greatly improved and prospered, in some instances; and, in others, are afflicted, brought to a stand, or suffered to decline.

But, with all these inequalities in the course of the Christian, his holiness, like *the house of David, waxes stronger and stronger;* and his corruption, like *the house of Saul, becomes weaker and weaker.*

3dly. *The process of sanctification is Universal.*

By this I intend, that *it affects the whole man:* his views, affections, purposes, and conduct; and those of every kind. It extends alike to his duties of every kind: towards himself, his fellow-creatures, and his Maker. It affects, and improves, indiscriminately, all the virtues of the Christian character: Love to God and to mankind; faith, repentance, justice, truth, kindness, humility, forgiveness, charity, generosity, public spirit, meekness, patience, fortitude, temperance, moderation, candour, and charitableness of judgment. It influences ruling passions and appetites; habits of thought and affection, of language and practice. It prompts to all the acts of piety: to prayer, praise, attendance upon the sanctuary and its ordinances, our sanctification of the Sabbath, Christian communion, and Christian discipline.

Generally, it affects every part of the Christian's character and life; and all it affects with continual advantage. Yet, as has been already remarked, the operation is not uniform. All the Christian virtues increase; yet they do not all increase alike: nor does any one of them increase in the same manner at all times. In the Scriptures, the improvement of the mind in the Christian character is, with great beauty and correctness, compared to the growth of Children. Children grow from their birth; and may be truly said to be always growing: yet the increase is not always alike, nor always visible. They grow, also, in every part of their frame; increasing, upon the whole, both in size and stature, throughout all the members. Yet at some times, and in some of the members, they cannot be seen to grow at all: while at other times, and in other members, the increase is rapid, and easily discernible. The means of growth, also, are very various, and variously operative. From day to day, from week to week, and sometimes from year to year, the progress cannot be perceived. And, in some instances, one part is found to increase, another to be at a stand, or even to diminish; and thus the symmetry, proportion, and beauty, of the frame, to be sensibly injured. In all these particulars, the parallel between the growth of Christians, and the growth of children, is exact.

4thly. *The progress of sanctification is conspicuous in the life.*

From the commencement of Christianity in the soul, the Christian course is that of *a general reformation*. The religion, that *brings* not *forth fruits meet for repentance*, is not the religion of the Scriptures. It is not the beginning of spiritual life. It is not the beginning of immortal life. The virtue of the Gospel is a living principle, producing every good fruit; rendering the man wiser, and his life and conversation better, unto the end. The natural passions and appetites of some Christians are, indeed, strong; and their evil habits, antecedently to regeneration, have become powerful. The temptations of others are peculiarly great; and they labour under peculiar disadvantages for resisting them, as well as for making progress in the Christian life.

As the work of Sanctification itself proceeds, according to the exhibition which I have made of this subject, in irregular and very various gradations; so the external fruits of it, seen in the life of the Christian, are subject to the same gradations. *The wind bloweth*, not only *where*, but in what manner, *it listeth;* and no particular description can be satisfactorily given of its progress.

The varieties of this work, which I have all along referred to the life of a single person, become far more numerous, and diversified, when referred to Christians in general. Here, both the original and incidental differences are multiplied almost without end; and it is impossible to mention even a small part of them in the compass of a single discourse. Still the same general doctrines are applicable, and useful, to all Christians; because all have a common nature, and a common interest.

## REMARKS.

1st. *The considerations, suggested concerning this important religious subject, furnish every professing Christian with an interesting rule for the examination of his own character.*

It has been here exhibited, as the true process of sanctification, that this work is carried on through the whole of human life; as the continual, though not uniform, state of the Christian character, to be advancing, under the influence of the divine Spirit, *towards the stature of the perfect man.* With this scheme in view, it becomes every professor of Religion faithfully to inquire, whether he perceives in his own mind such a progress. It will readily be seen, that Christians, who have lately become such, must have fewer and more imperfect means of making this inquiry, and determining the point satisfactorily, than those who are farther advanced. The longer children have been growing, the more perceivable will be the change of their stature. The longer Christians have been Christians, the greater advances in Religion will they have had opportunity to make. The child may have grown in reality, through a short period; while yet his growth is incapable of being perceived. The young Christian may, in like manner, find less proof of his advancement; or doubtful proof; or even no proof at all; and yet have no sufficient reason for discouragement. Still he ought to make the inquiry: and to make it with persevering diligence. If he be faithful in this duty, he will, in all probability, and at no great distance of time, find comforting evidence of his growth in grace; and usually the sooner, the more faithful he is in pursuing this examination.

The professor, who has longer declared his devotion to God, is bound still more earnestly to make this inquiry. *One*, at least, of the best proofs which can be furnished, of the existence of grace in the soul, is *evidence of its growth;* and one of which we ought never to lose sight, even for a day. If we go on from month to month, and from year to year, without any improvement in the Christian life; our case must be dark and distressing indeed. Much more distressing must it be, if, instead of advancing, we sensibly decline. Christians may, and will, fall into temptation, and sin; and sometimes into sins, which are great, and peculiarly dreadful. Thus did *David;* thus did *Solomon;* thus did *Peter.* These are fearful grounds of humiliation and sorrow; but even these, when followed by contrition and amendment, are far less discouraging and hopeless, than that slow, regular decline, that chilled, perishing state, which admits of no intervenings of warmth, no returns of health and vigour. The pleurisy, or the gout, may kill; and *often* greatly alarm, and endanger; but they frequently, nay, most usually, terminate their violence speedily, and give place to returning strength. The consumption, on the other hand, although its attacks are gentle, gradual, and scarcely perceivable, insinuates itself with a fatal progress into the constitution; and if not exterminated in season, regularly ends in death. I will not say, that

a hectic in religion is hopeless; but it must be allowed, on all hands, to be terrible. Let it be observed in this place, however, that Christians sometimes are really advancing, when they do not perceive it; and when their progress, although hidden from themselves, is visible to those around them. This, together with other mysteries, God will unfold hereafter; and will show them, that the dispensation has been the means of his glory, and of their own final good. All Christians ought to learn, from this fact, to consult their fellow-christians, as well as themselves, on this great subject; and not to depend entirely on their own investigation.

If, on the other hand, professors of Religion find themselves advancing in faith, repentance, and holiness; if God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is more and more an object of delightful contemplation to their minds; if they take more and more delight in prayer and praise, in the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, and their ordinances; if the Word of God seems more and more preferable *to the most fine gold;* if they love more and more to *do good unto all men;* if they find an increasing delight in the character, company, conversation, and prosperity, of their fellow-christians: then they may, indeed, *sing of mercy;* and enjoy a lively hope, that they are fast overcoming the world, and preparing for the glories of the heavenly kingdom.

2dly. *The same considerations furnish abundant encouragement to the Christian.*

Think how much God has done to accomplish this work; and you can find no room for despondency. I well know, I readily confess, how prone all men are to yield to temptations; to love the world; to indulge appetite and passion; to embrace error; to cherish self-justification; to find ways of sinning, which in their own eyes are safe and blameless; to reconcile, and unite virtues to their counterfeit vices; and thus, in a great variety of modes, to backslide, and sin, and fall. How hopeless, with these things in our view, would seem final, persevering holiness, and a safe arrival in the heavenly kingdom!

But the agency of the Spirit of God, in our sanctification, puts all these terrible evils to flight; and assures us, that *He, who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of Christ.* He is every where present to every Christian; knows every want, and danger; and is ever ready to do all that is necessary, and useful, for the followers of Christ. No evil can escape his eye; no enemy resist, or elude, his power. With infinite benignity and tenderness he dwells within, and without us, to guard, relieve, heal, sanctify, and save; to give us strength to endure, and power to overcome. Under his influence and direction, we shall successfully *fight the good fight, keep the faith, finish our course with joy, and receive that crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to all them that love his appearing. Thanks be to God for* this *unspeakable gift.* Amen.

# SERMON LXXXIV.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.

JOHN xiv. 27.—*Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

HAVING examined the Nature of *Adoption*, and *Sanctification*, I shall now proceed to consider another consequence of this change in man: viz. *Evangelical Peace*.

These words are a part of Christ's first discourse to his Apostles, after the institution of the Lord's Supper. He was now about to leave the world. His death he had often predicted to them in the plainest language: yet so strong were their expectations of a reigning, conquering Messiah, that they seem never to have believed these predictions. So far as they were able, they appear to have interpreted them in any manner, rather than the true one; and, when they could not misinterpret them, to have concluded, that they involved some mystery, which it was beyond their power to unriddle.

However, as the time drew near, and the events, which led to this great one, began to thicken, they became apprehensive and alarmed. What evils were before them they seem not to have realized; but they appear to have been fully sensible, that something terrible was at hand, and to have become deeply discouraged by loose and undefined forebodings.

Christ understood, perfectly, the state of their minds; and, with his own peculiar tenderness, commenced the benevolent work of furnishing them the necessary relief. This he accomplished in three discourses: the first included in this, the second in the two following, and the third in the seventeenth, chapters. Never were consolations so well devised, or so well administered. The discourses are beautiful beyond all parallel; supremely instructive; exquisitely tender; and replete with considerations of the most supporting nature. The last of them is a *prayer;* more interesting, more sublime, more wonderful, than ever was, or ever will be, uttered in the present world; and may fairly be regarded as a specimen of that intercession, which the divine Advocate makes for his followers *before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*.

Among the considerations which endear these discourses of Christ to his children, the most affecting one is, *they are his dying words;* his last addresses before he ascended the cross. They succeeded the institution of the Sacramental supper: they preceded the Cru-

cifixion. Never was there an occasion so interesting, so solemn, so divine; nor was any mind, beside that of Christ, ever so perfectly fitted to understand, and feel, the nature of this occasion, or so able to employ it to the best of all purposes. He seems, here, to have poured out his soul with supreme love, and infinite endearment. The whole Saviour is brought out to view: the God becomes visible in his most lovely and glorious character.

The Apostles were now to be left by him; to go, unbefriended and unprotected, into a world of enemies; and to meet all the evils, which could be inflicted on them by bigotry, malice, and persecution. To support them in this state of suffering, he promises them a rich variety of blessings; particularly, the presence, and everlasting love, of his Father and himself; reminds them of his own sufferings, and of the fortitude, with which he had endured them; and assures to them the consolations of the Spirit of truth, as a most desirable, and delightful, support under all external distresses.

Of all the blessings, contained in these promises, none seems to be better suited to their situation, and their wants, than that, which is announced in the text. When contentions multiply, and enemies invade, from without; when friends withdraw, and comforts diminish; when enjoyments lessen, and hope retires; nothing can be more timely, more desirable, more welcome, than peace within: peace, quieting all the tumults of the mind, soothing the wounds of a troubled conscience, and allaying, on the one hand, fear; on the other, suffering.

That we may understand the value of this legacy, left by the Redeemer not to the Apostles only, but to all his followers, it will be useful to consider,

I. *The Nature of the Peace, which he gave;* and,

II. *The Manner, in which he gave it.*

I. *I will endeavour to explain the Nature of the peace, which Christ gave his disciples.*

Peace is always opposed to war; and, when begun in any instance, involves the cessation of the preceding conflict. With a direct reference to such a conflict, Christ was pleased to bestow the blessing, mentioned in the text; and called it by a name, fitted to show both the nature of the evils to be remedied, and the nature of the remedy.

Such a conflict actually exists between man *and himself; his fellow-men; and his Maker. Against God* this hostility manifests itself in ten thousand acts of resistance to his pleasure. While *He* claims the supreme love, and implicit obedience, of every Intelligent creature, man denies both his claims, and the rights on which they are founded; and boldly sets up in opposition to them, claims and rights of his own, which he determines to support to the utmost of his power. For this end he commences a progress of revolt, and contention, which occupies most of his time, and most of his

thoughts; and, at death, leaves, not unfrequently, the controversy undecided.

*With his fellow-men* his contention arises from two sources: *his own* selfishness, *and theirs*. The mind, in which selfishness reigns, always wishes, intends, and labours, to make every other interest subservient to its own; or, at the least, to prevent it from disturbing, precluding, or diminishing, its own. From this source have sprung all the private, and all the public, contentions, which have destroyed the peace of neighbourhoods, and ravaged the world; the sufferings and the sighs, the tears and the groans, which have spread from one end of heaven to the other.

Nor is man less busily employed in conflicting *with himself*. The passions and appetites of the human heart have ever opposed the dictates of Conscience. The Conscience was intended by God to regulate the moral conduct of the man; and strenuously, and firmly, asserts its right to this most important, and most necessary, control. Still more strenuously the passions rebel against it; force the man to submit to their own dictates; and hurry him into a course of disobedience. In this progress of guilt, Conscience holds out her dreadful mirror to his terrified eye; and exhibits him to himself, odious, deformed, and fearfully exposed to the anger of God.

To this distracted, miserable being, peace is announced, in the text, by Him, who knew all the wants, sufferings, and dangers, of our race. Upon a strict examination, the legacy will be found to be exactly suited to the state of those, for whom it was intended.

1st. *It is a happy state of the Mind, or Intellect.*

Every person, who has at all entertained serious and solemn thoughts concerning religious subjects, must have often perceived a multitude of doubts, springing up in his mind, at different times, concerning the Word of God; the evidence, by which its divine origin is evinced; and the nature of the doctrines, and precepts, which it contains. These doubts may, at times, grow out of ignorance; usually they spring from the heart; from its disrelish to the truth itself, and its opposition to its Author. Every doubt on this subject is attended with some degree of distress. The soul is unwilling, that there should be any such truths; and that God should have such a character, as to be capable of being the author of them. Especially is this observation applicable to those doctrines, which exhibit ourselves as guilty, condemned, and ruined; and God as pure, holy, and sovereign. Against these doctrines mankind have contended in all ages; have doubted their truth; have denied their import; and have exploded the evidence, by which they were sustained. In the place of these doctrines the mind substitutes others, which are more palatable to itself. For their obvious and real meaning, which it is determined not to admit, it substitutes others; kindred, perhaps, and plausible, but oblique, and

incapable of being supported. In this manner it struggles to get loose from the truth of God; sometimes by believing, that he has made no revelation of his will to mankind; sometimes by determining, that he has made no such revelation, and is commonly received; and generally by adopting a creed, essentially different from that which is contained in the Scriptures. Every part of this creed it makes more pleasing to itself, less terrifying, less humiliating, and yet, as it hopes, equally safe.

Still, Revelation, in spite of all these labours and struggles, continues to be supported by no small evidence. The *obvious* meaning of the doctrines, which it contains, will, at times, appear but too probably the *true* meaning. In spite of the mind itself, its arguments, and persuasions, God may, and it frequently fears, will, be found to be just such a Being, as he seems to be exhibited in the Scriptures. Its own character, also, it almost daily suspects, (and conscience perpetually enhances the suspicion) is just such, as the Scriptures have declared; and its danger neither less real, nor less terrible. Thus the soul becomes *a troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*

Nor is either this opposition, or the distress which springs from it, less excited by the tenour of the Scriptural *precepts*, than by that of the *doctrines*. In the view of such a mind the precepts appear to be unnecessarily numerous, nice, and rigid; enjoining many things, which it thinks might better have been omitted; and prohibiting many things, which, it conceives, would have been much better allowed. The life, which they require, it pronounces to be unnecessarily strict, difficult, and discouraging; and regards as being of a gloomy and melancholy nature. Hence it supposes, and at times believes, that God cannot have intended, that his precepts should be understood in their obvious meaning; and that some other meaning, attended with many softenings, and involving many limitations, is to be attributed to them; or that, at the worst, a partial, imperfect obedience to them will ultimately be accepted.

Under the influence of these wishes, and the views to which they give birth, accompanied by fears, that the things, thus opposed, may all be the real pleasure of God; the views erroneous, and the wishes sinful; such a mind wearies itself to find out a more palatable moral system; is harassed by suspense, and distressed by painful apprehensions.

But when the hostility of the heart towards its Maker, and towards his truth, is dissolved by the mild influence of the Spirit of grace; and the soul is indued with love to its Maker; the character of God, and the doctrines and precepts of his Word, are seen with new optics; and appear, therefore, in a new light. It is the nature of Evangelical love to delight, alike, in the Truth and its Author. Both are thenceforth seen with the eyes of good-will. Of course, God appears to the mind, invested with his proper character and supreme glory; as the sum of all excellence; as infi-

nitely great, and wise, and good. It is seen to be impossible for him to deceive, or to be deceived. Whatever he declares is, therefore, admitted without reserve. The divine origin of the Scriptures is readily believed, because the evidence, which supports it, is such, as to satisfy any candid mind; and because the mind, in question, has now become possessed of real candour. The true and obvious meaning of the doctrines and precepts, wherever it is seen, is readily received, because it is relished, and because God is believed to have made his precepts *plain to him, that understandeth;* or, in other words, is possessed of piety. The things, to be believed, the mind now loves to believe. The things required, it now chooses to do. The nature of the doctrines, and the reasons on which the precepts are founded, it will, indeed, at times, be unable to unravel. But here its faith, and obedience, will be implicit; because it knows, that God does not prescribe without the best reasons, and that his instructions, however mysterious, must be always true, and always desirable. What it understands it welcomes. What it does not understand, it receives with a humble submission to him, who has said, *The secret things belong to God; but the things, that are revealed, belong to men.*

From such a mind, it is easy to see, suspense and perplexity must vanish of course; together with all the agitation, fear, and pain, with which they were attended. The weapons of its warfare have been laid down; its toils are ended, its alarms are over; its struggles are relinquished; and a delightful repose has succeeded to its multiplied, long-continued, and painful efforts; a repose, doubly delightful, in its own nature; and as a charming contrast to the various troubles, by which it has been so often, and so deeply distressed.

2dly. *It is the happy state of the Affections.*

It has been already sufficiently indicated, that the affections are originally alienated from God, and opposed to his government, and pleasure. The spirit of apostacy is, primarily, a spirit of pride and self-dependence; which always exalts itself against its Maker. The angels, who fell, fell by refusing to *keep their first estate;* την εαυτων αρχην; *their own office*, or *principality;* and by *deserting* (απολιποντας) *their habitation;* οικητηριον, *their station.* They refused to continue even in that exalted rank of existence, and to execute the duties of that high station, assigned to them by the goodness of God. The same spirit predominates in fallen men. *They* too are dissatisfied with their own station, and their own duties. All apostate beings say to God in their hearts, *We will not have Thee to reign over us.*

Equally hostile to the divine government is *the lust of the flesh:* sensuality; *and the lust of the eyes:* avarice. Concerning these three great controlling affections of the human mind, it is alike true, that *they are not of the Father, but of the world;* and that, wherever they reign, *the love of the Father* cannot exist.

From the indulgence of this spirit, continually spring up in the soul haughty claims upon its Maker for an increase of its enjoyments, and an exemption from its duties: claims, which God never satisfies, unless in the way of judgment, and indignation. The soul, therefore, is discontented with its allotments; questions his wisdom, goodness, and truth; murmurs against his providence; refuses to perform its own duty; and thus carries on a continual, ardent, painful conflict with its Maker.

A controversy with such a Being, as God, cannot fail of being attended with perpetual anxiety and alarm. He, who is the subject of it, dreads the presence of God; is terrified by all the threatenings of his Word; trembles at the approach of Death; shrinks from the Judgment; and looks towards a future retribution with horror.

Of these evils there is but one possible termination; and that is, submission to God. Whenever this is accomplished in earnest, they dissolve, like an enchantment in Arabian tales. The Creator, before dreaded and hated, is changed at once, to the view of the soul, into an affectionate Parent, reverenced, loved, and delightfully obeyed. This awful enemy becomes instantaneously an everlasting and almighty Friend; this hard Master, a divine and boundless Benefactor. His character is then contemplated with awe, indeed, but with delight also. His *commandments*, no longer *grievous*, are preferred to *thousands of gold and of silver*. His presence, no longer terrible, is continually coveted; and communion with him in prayer, and praise, is daily sought, and delightfully found.

In this manner the affections become serene, cheerful and pleasant. The storm subsides into a calm; and the darkness of the soul is illumined with a perpetual sunshine.

3dly. *It is a happy state of the Conscience.*

When the affections have thus bowed to their Creator; when the soul has sincerely said, *Thy will be done;* Conscience, unopposed and undisturbed, dictates whatever is to be done; and smiles its approbation, whenever it is performed. In the various retrospects, which the Christian takes of his progress, at the end of a day, a week, a month, or a year, he is enabled to look on, and approve; and to feel a supporting hope, that he is approved, in some good measure, by his God. His thoughts, affections, and designs, cease to be objects of dread; and self-examination, to be a duty, which he cannot perform. To himself he is no longer a stranger. Prayer, he no longer dreads. From his moral character he no longer shrinks. At his future destiny he ceases to shudder. A daily, welcome, cheerful visiter at the internal fire-side, he finds there nothing but peace, harmony, and pleasure.

4thly. *It is a happy state of the Life.*

In a world, like this, it will not be imagined, that external peace can be perfect. Although the man in question is possessed of a

peaceful spirit only, yet in those around him he will not always find the same disposition. In *him* there is no cause of hostility; but in *them* it will not, of course, be extinguished. While he is surrounded by beings of this description, therefore, he cannot expect undisturbed peace. Yet amid the discord, and violence, of this world, his moderation, his kindness, will either allay, or quietly and firmly endure, the storm. Men of candid dispositions, beholding his conduct, will approve, and commend; and men of prejudice and passion will often be overcome, and desist from their persecution.

Yet even here he will find many persons of a character, kindred to his own. Of the approbation, the love, and the kind offices, of these men, he is assured. The esteem of Wisdom, and Worth, is invaluable; is accompanied by sincere love; is followed by a perpetual train of kind offices; and is, therefore, an ample compensation for the contempt, hatred, and obloquy, of all the unreasonable, and unworthy. Should he meet, then, with many troubles from men of this character; he will still find a rich enjoyment from the approbation and good-will of the wise and virtuous; *a table* of rich viands, *spread* before him *in the presence of his enemies; a cup, running over* with blessings.

At the same time he is still more refreshed, and comforted, by a sense of the approbation of God. A humble hope of forgiveness is accompanied, of course, by a hope of the divine complacency. The *favour* of God even in this world *is life*, and *his loving-kindness better than life*. A disposition to obey this great and glorious Being is always delightful; and his *law sweeter* to an evangelical taste *than honey, and the honey-comb*. Although men, therefore, although all men, should rise up in hostility against him; he would say with *David, The Lord is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do unto me? I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. The Lord God is* his *shield:* he cannot fail, therefore, of being safe. The *Lord God is* his *sun:* his life will, therefore, be cheered with the light of heaven.

II. *The Manner, in which this legacy is given, is taught in those remarkable words of our Saviour, Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

The world gives with an intention to gain, at least as much as it gave; and thus gives for its own benefit; not for ours. The world gives by halves; and often resumes what it has given. The world gives grudgingly; with a meanness, which embitters the boon, to those who receive it. The world gives in pretence, and not in reality: its gifts being, at best, of little value, and of momentary duration. Finally; the world reproaches us, as being deeply indebted for its largesses; and imperiously demands servile acknowledgments, and base compliances, as a proper return for the obligations which it has conferred.

Christ, on the contrary, gives with perfect liberality, and unlimited bounty; cheerfully; never resuming what he has given; for our benefit only; really, and not in pretence; with absolute sincerity, and supreme nobleness of disposition. His gifts also, while they are of high value in themselves, endure for ever. At the same time he never reproaches us on account of his blessings; and demands of us no unworthy sacrifices.

## REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1st. *How to estimate this legacy of Christ.*

To a Being, in the situation of man, as described in the former part of this discourse, such a gift is plainly and pre-eminently necessary. Condemned, loathed, and afflicted, by his Maker, he has no friend, to whom he may betake himself for consolation; and no refuge, to which he may fly for safety. Whatever he does; God is present to see, and to retribute. An Enemy here, he is an enemy every where: an enemy, from whom there is no concealment, defence, nor escape. Still the circumstances of the unhappy man would be less dreadful, if he could find peace and support within. But, there, Conscience arms herself against him; while his rebellious passions bring their pain in hand, and are frequently followed by remorse and despair. When he looks abroad, he sees his fellow-creatures at war with him, also; and from them seeks in vain for an alleviation of his sufferings.

In this situation Christ proclaims to him peace with God, with mankind, and with himself; *peace passing all understanding;* peace, which *the world can neither give, nor take away.* Henceforth, nothing is desirable in his sight, but that which God chooses; nothing lovely, but that which God loves. To know the divine will is, in his view, to know all that is necessary; and to obey it, all that is useful. He is assured of the divine protection, and is therefore safe: for he knows, that no enemy can endanger his welfare, or disturb his repose.

In the mean time, *his soul* has *returned to its rest*, and is quiet. The storm is past; and is succeeded by serenity and sunshine. If he finds enemies abroad; he disarms half their rage by his own meekness: the rest he sustains, pities, and forgives.

In times of danger, when God comes out against mankind, to *judge the world in righteousness*, he enjoys the unspeakable consolation of believing, that this awful Being is a friend to *him.* When, therefore, the tempest rages, the famine desolates, or the pestilence hurries its victims to the grave; *when a thousand fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand; it shall not come near* HIM.

Afflictions will, however, reach even *him.* It is necessary, that he should be chastened: and *chastening* in its very nature *is grievous.* But, for this grief the peace of the Gospel provides a sure

and delightful alleviation. The pain, he knows, is inflicted by the *Father of his spirit; that he may become a partaker of his holiness, and live.* He receives it, therefore, with patience and resignation; and thus strips disease of its languor; robs pain of its sting; and lights up a cheering lamp in the dark chambers of sorrow.

In death, that melancholy and distressing day to the wicked, his eye penetrates the gloom, and descries the glorious morning which dawns beyond it. On the other side of this narrow gloomy valley, spreads a world of peace: where no storm ever blows; no enemy ever invades; and no danger ever threatens. There all are friends. God is his friend: Christ is his friend: and none but his friends are found among *the innumerable company of angels*, or *the general assembly of the first-born.*

2dly. *How greatly is this blessing enhanced by the consideration, that Christ has given us* HIS OWN PEACE.

*Peace I leave with you;* MY PEACE *I give unto you.* In this declaration we are reminded of the glorious character of *Him*, who bestows the legacy, and of the wonderful things, which he has done to procure it for *us.* Christ is divinely great and excellent; and the gift is suited to his character; is excellent, noble, and divine. It is the rich fruit, the genuine evidence, of virtue: a seal, impressed by the Saviour on the soul, as unquestionable proof, that it has become his: a living witness, that he has there taken up his residence, as in a temple, in which he is pleased to dwell. It is his *still, small voice*, whispering in delightful accents, that he is there; and that he is there, on his own most benevolent purpose of purifying it for heaven, and quickening it with immortal life. The Giver is divine; the gift is divine: the end, for which it is given, is also divine.

The things, which he has done, and suffered, to procure this gift for man, are infinitely great and endearing. For this end, when he was *in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he made himself of no reputation; was made in the likeness of men; and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* In the peace, which Christians enjoy, they are presented with a perpetual memorial of these wonderful efforts of him, *who* thus *in his flesh abolished the enmity; and made, preached, and became, Peace to them who were afar off, and to them who were nigh.* Whenever this delightful serenity of soul is enjoyed by us, we cannot easily avoid recollecting, that with boundless benignity the Son of God became man; lived a life of unceasing humiliation and suffering; died on the cross; rose from the dead; ascended to heaven; and there intercedes for ever, that this blessing may be ours. What love can be compared to this? What character was ever so lovely, so endearing, so peculiarly divine?

As the Peace of Christ, also, this glorious possession assumes a new character of excellence and worth. In him, this peace was

the result of consummate wisdom and supreme rectitude: a divine harmony of perfect intelligence and immeasurable love. It was a possession completely independent. None could give it: none could take it away. In the pure, serene, eternal Mind of the Saviour, it dwelt of course, inseparably, and for ever. It was the necessary and immortal offspring of immortal excellence: the coeternal splendour of light eternal. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the world; then was it by him, as one brought up with him; and was daily his delight, rejoicing alway before him: rejoicing* with a divine prescience *in the* future, *habitable parts of the earth, and* placing *its delights in the sons of men.*

In his Mediatorial residence among the children of apostate *Adam;* amid all his sorrows and labours, amid all the opposition, rejection, and persecution, which he experienced; amid all the living anguish, and dying agonies, which he suffered; this celestial companion, this divine inmate of his bosom, perpetually sustained him; and diffused fortitude and serenity around his soul. Thus sustained, thus tranquillized, he smiled in agony, and triumphed in death.

To us, as to him, it is peace *passing all understanding; peace, which the world cannot give, nor take away. Grace* and *Mercy* descend first in the train of infinite blessings *from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ;* and *Peace* enters our doors immediately behind them. A guest, fresh from heaven, and from the presence of God, Peace bears all the characteristics of the world from which she descends; of the region in which she was born; of the family to which she is allied; and of the Parent, from whom she sprang. Gentle and serene, beautiful and lovely, she becomes a willing companion to every humble, faithful follower of the Lamb; to every genuine child of God. Her own angelic disposition she breathes insensibly into the soul; her softness and gentleness she infuses into the heart; and her living smiles she spreads over the aspect. At once, the man is changed into a new creature. His soul, before the region of darkness and storm, is cleared, at once, of the clouds by which it was overcast. Its tempestuous passions cease to rage, and ravage; and a heavenly sunshine illumines the world within. The universe, to him heretofore a vast kingdom of war and opposition, is converted into a delightful residence of quiet and harmony; in which an immense *multitude* of the inhabitants, such as *no man can number*, are become his friends, and in which the hostilities of the rest will only work together for his good. God, also, seen by him before *in clouds and darkness*, which were *very tempestuous round about him*, has unfolded to him the light of his countenance; and given him a lively and transporting earnest of serene, unclouded, everlasting day.

# SERMON LXXXV.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

ROMANS xiv. 17.—*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

ON the last Sabbath, I considered the nature and importance of *Spiritual Peace.* I shall proceed to examine another consequence of Regeneration: viz. *Joy in the Holy Ghost.*

In the text, the Apostle declares, that *the Kingdom of God* is formed of *Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* By this kingdom he intends, plainly, not the kingdom of Creation, nor the kingdom of Providence, nor, in a strict sense, what is usually called the kingdom of Grace. The word kingdom is here used in a figurative manner; and denotes *the Effects of that secret, invisible, incomprehensible influence over the hearts of mankind, which is exerted by the Spirit of Grace in the work of Sanctification.* This influence is the great engine of the divine government over the hearts of Intelligent beings; and is often with the utmost propriety termed in the Gospel the kingdom of God. Of this influence, *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*, are *effects*, primarily important; and in the text are, figuratively, called by a name, which, in simple language, would properly belong to *the Cause of their existence.* In a similar manner is the term used by Christ, Luke xvii. 20, *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say concerning it, Lo here, or lo there: for the kingdom of God is within you.*

Of these three great effects of the energy of the divine Spirit, the first, viz. *Righteousness*, here used for holiness or Evangelical virtue, is, in the soul, the cause of the two last. From Righteousness, in this sense, spring, of course, the Peace and Joy of the Spiritual character. *Joy in the Holy Ghost*, therefore, is obviously a consequence of Regeneration. In the text, as well as in the order of nature, it is subjoined to Peace; although we are ever to remember, that they always exist together in the same mind, and at the same time.

In examining this subject, the following considerations have occurred to me as particularly deserving the attention of a religious assembly.

I. *The Joy, spoken of in the text, is not a mere Natural joy.*

By *natural joy*, I intend *the pleasure which is found by the mind in natural or physical good, whether possessed, or expected.* Such

is the pleasure, which we experience in property, health, friends, food, and other gratifications of a similar nature. Such is the pleasure, found in the contemplation of beauty, novelty, and greatness; in the multitude, variety, and sublimity, of the works of Creation and Providence; or in the skill, power, and wisdom displayed by their Author. Such, also, is the satisfaction, experienced in the mere belief, that God is reconciled to us, and become our friend and benefactor.

All these I acknowledge to be innocent and lawful enjoyments. I acknowledge them to be enjoyments which we are not merely permitted, but required, to experience; and to be enjoyments also, in greater or less degrees, experienced by every sanctified mind. Still they may be possessed in a manner, merely natural; and by a mind, utterly destitute of the Evangelical character. When the Christian rejoices in these things, he rejoices virtuously; because he regards them with just views. But when a sinner rejoices in them, he regards them with erroneous views, and with emotions destitute of virtue. Evangelical joy in these things is one of *the fruits of the Spirit*. But nothing, experienced by a sinner, can be a peculiar characteristic of a Christian. Nor is any genuine fruit of the Spirit ever found in an unsanctified mind.

II. *Joy in the Holy Ghost is, however, joy in God.*

God is the only solid foundation of joy to the universe; and is seen and acknowledged, in this character, by every virtuous being. In this most pleasing and magnificent manner, he is every where exhibited in the Scriptures. *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous!* says the Psalmist. Ps. xxxiii. 1. *Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord*, saith the Prophet *Isaiah, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.* Is. xli. 16. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God;* saith our Saviour; Is. lxi. 10. *Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God;* saith Joel, chapter ii. 23. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation.* Hab. iii. 17, 18. The same language is adopted by the Virgin *Mary*, and by *St. Paul*, in the New Testament; and is applied by Christ to the Apostles; and to the whole body of Christians; either as an account of facts; or as a precept, directing their duty.

To Revelation, Reason joins her fullest testimony; and easily discerns, when informed of the true character of God by Revelation, that in him the proper, rational, supreme, and eternal joy of his Intelligent creatures must ultimately centre; and that he is the object, to be thus enjoyed, as well as the source whence this enjoyment flows. The eternal, unchangeable, almighty, all-knowing, the infinitely just, faithful, true, benevolent, and merciful Mind is, in an infinite degree, a more beautiful, lovely, and glorious object

in itself, than any, or than all, others. Of such a Mind all the conduct, all the manifestations, are accordant with its true and essential nature; are beautiful, glorious, and lovely, like itself. These amazing considerations are also enhanced, in a manner literally boundless, by the great fact, that from this Mind sprang all the objects of admiration, and delight, which are found in the Universe.

*In the Power of God*, we are presented with an everlasting and unlimited source of joy; when it is considered as perfect Sufficiency for every great and good purpose; for the accomplishment of whatever wisdom can approve, or virtue delight in; and for the accomplishment of this in the manner, which is perfectly desirable.

*In the Knowledge of God*, there is an endless source of delight; as the original spring, whence have flowed the innumerable beings, and events, of the Universe; together with their attributes, operations, and effects. In the perpetually diversified structure, the wonderful purposes, and the no less wonderful uses, of these, is the state of the infinite Mind, as the Origin of whatever is great and good, presented to us in a manner, perfect in itself, and endlessly delightful to every virtuous beholder. The mineral, vegetable, and animal, kingdoms, even of this world, are full of these displays; and the structure, powers, and operations, of a single being, furnish a field of investigation, altogether too wide for the comprehension of any human understanding.

*In the Bounty of God*, we behold an amazing source of gratitude, and of the pleasure, always found in that most amiable and delightful emotion. We here discern ample provision made for our continuance in being; for our daily wants; and for all our reasonable wishes. Our food and raiment are most liberally supplied; our innocent desires most richly gratified; our taste delighted with the beauty, novelty, and grandeur, of the world around us; our eyes charmed with the glorious prospects of the earth and the heavens; and our ears feasted with melody and harmony.

*In the Mercy of God*, the soul is assured, that its sins may be forgiven, and its nature renewed; is presented with the most illustrious proofs of divine Love, and the overflowings of infinite tenderness towards a world of apostates. It is *here* furnished with the greatest and best gift of God; Evangelical Virtue; and *beyond the grave*, is secured in the endless possession of unmingled and unfading happiness. From sin, its own most debased character, and from misery, its proper reward, it is here presented with a final deliverance; is instamped with the image of God, and admitted to the kingdom of the blessed.

In the *Truth and Faithfulness* of this perfect Being, the soul is furnished with entire security, that His declarations are steadfast and immoveable; and that *his promises endure for ever*. The encouragement, given to it, therefore, of both present and future

good, is encouragement, on which perfect reliance may be placed, and with regard to which disappointment can never arise, either here or hereafter. When we remember, that one of these promises to Christians is, that *all things shall be theirs;* and another, *that all things shall work together for their good;* the importance of this consideration appears to be literally infinite. On these declarations the virtuous Universe reposes with absolute safety, and with reliance which will strengthen for ever.

*The Justice of God* is seen to be the immensely grand and awful, yet the immensely beneficial, administration of the vast kingdom of Jehovah. In the exercise of this glorious attribute are secured all the rights of intelligent creatures, and their infallible and complete protection from every ultimate wrong. The least right, and the least wrong, of the least individual, are as firmly assured, as the greatest interests of Angels and Archangels. By this amazing Mind nothing is forgotten, or unregarded. *Lazarus*, at the gate, is as effectually remembered, as *David*, on the throne; or *Gabriel*, *standing before God* in the highest heavens.

*Alone*, and *to a world of sinners*, the Justice of God would be only great and terrible; but, harmonizing with Mercy in all its dictates, it renders, even to our view, the character of the great Possessor transcendently excellent and amiable. What would become of the universe, were God to be unjust? What creature would for a moment be safe; what interest uninvaded?

Of these glorious attributes, we need not, in order to find displays, cast our eyes abroad into incomprehensible systems of worlds and beings. At home, by our firesides, in our friends, in our families, in our bodies, and in our minds, they are seen with high advantage and supreme endearment. Are we fed? The hand which feeds us is that of our heavenly Father. Are we clothed? He made the flax to grow; he formed the fleece; he gave the silkworm skill, to spin her mysterious thread; and brought to us the necessary, and beautiful materials, to form our attire. Are we in health? He preserves in their pristine strength the numerous powers of our bodies; sends the stream of life through our veins; and animates our hearts with wonderful and unceasing energy. Do we see? He contrived the eye. Do we hear? He fashioned the ear. Do we think, and choose, and feel? He lighted up the lamp of Reason in our minds. Are we, and ours, virtuous? He poured out the Spirit of sanctification upon our minds. Have we enjoyments? He provided them. Have we hopes? They all sprang from his bounty, and are secured by his unchangeable promise.

All these divine considerations are enhanced beyond measure by the nature of those attributes, which may be termed qualifications of these. The *Omnipresence* of God teaches us, that all these perfections are every where present; every where ready to be employed in the production of good. His *Immutability* proves to us, that these perfections will never be changed in their nature, de-

gree, and operations; and that, as he has thus acted, so he will always act in the same manner. The *Eternity* of God shows us, that these perfections will know no end; and that, therefore, the enjoyments of his children will endure for ever. Thus what God is here, he is every where; what he is now, he will be through eternity.

*In the venerable and endearing characters of the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier, of mankind,* God appears as the source of peculiar joy. *As the Father of mankind,* he appears as a Sovereign and Lawgiver, offended by our rebellion, but with infinite kindness proffering to us forgiveness and reconciliation; as sending, for this benevolent end, his beloved Son, to expiate our sins, and his holy Spirit, to renew our hearts and lives; and, thus, as opening his arms, unasked and undesired, to receive his penitent and returning children.

*In the endearing character of the Son,* he appears with boundless benignity, as *making an end of sin, finishing transgression, and bringing in everlasting righteousness;* as becoming man, that we might again be united to God; as dying, that we might live; as rising from the dead, ascending to heaven, assuming the government of all things, and interceding before the throne of infinite Majesty, that we might rise, hereafter, incorruptible and immortal; might follow him to the heavens; enjoy the infinite blessings of his administration; and be accepted as his faithful friends at the final day. Christ is *the Corner stone* of this *living* and glorious building, formed, according to the glowing language of St. Peter, of *living stones a spiritual house of God, eternal in the heavens.* On Him, the sole Foundation, the vast structure is erected, to stand for ever.

*By the Spirit of truth* is this mighty work completed. With infinite kindness and patience he awakens, convinces, renews, and purifies, the soul; forms it for endless holiness, and endless life; and conducts it through this earthly wilderness to the land of promise beyond the grave.

In all these things, united, is the Love of God seen with supreme advantage, as immense, unchanging, and eternal; as endeared with all possible tenderness; as overcoming the most perverse obstinacy; as forgiving the greatest guilt; as flowing out to enemies and apostates, condemned by unerring justice, and discarded by the virtuous universe.

To *the Christian,* in all these respects, is God the source of supreme and unceasing joy. As *a Christian,* he has become a new creature; entered into a new creation; and enrolled himself as a subject of a new and immortal kingdom. This kingdom is a kingdom in which will be progressively accomplished, universal, entire, and everlasting good. For this end it was created. To this end it is uniformly conducted by the all-pervading, all-ruling, hand of JEHOVAH. The subjects of it are universally *children of*

*light*. Their intercourse is an endless succession of diversified virtue and loveliness. Purity, dignity, and excellence, are their inherent characteristics; and everlasting happiness, and glory, their final destination. In all that they are, in all that they do, and in all that is done to them, God himself rejoices with intense and eternal joy.

With this new kingdom the Christian has begun an everlasting connexion. His union to the members of it, and his intercourse with them, instead of terminating, will unceasingly become more intimate, more endearing, more exalted. The views of *their* minds and *his* are destined to become perpetually more and more just and comprehensive; *their* affections and *his* to be more pure, intense, and noble; their mutual friendship to be more sweet and serene; and their conduct to be, in unceasing gradation, such as is proper to be exhibited in the house, and presence, of God.

In accordance with this state of things, therefore, will the whole scheme of the Christian's future being be formed. His plans will, of course, be concerted in such a manner, as to embrace, and promote eternal purposes. They will be the plans of an immortal being, destined to act with immortal beings in a boundless field of existence: the plans of a dutiful and faithful subject of the infinite Ruler; of a child, warmed with perpetual and filial piety to his divine Parent; of a brother, finally united to *the household which is named after Christ;* of a redeemed, sanctified, returning prodigal, brought back with infinite compassion, and infinite expense, to the house of his father, and welcomed with exquisite joy by the family of the first-born. To glorify God, to bless his fellow-creatures, and to be blessed by both, will be the combined and perfect end for which he lives. This end he will pursue in a world where no obstructions ever arise; where no toil ever wearies; where no disappointments ever intrude; where no temptations ever arrest; and where no enemies ever alarm: where his affections cannot be too intense, nor his pursuits too ardent; and where his only professional business will be to be virtuous and happy. As a citizen of this new and heavenly kingdom, the Christian begins his course of spiritual life. All these things are already become *his*. God is his Father; Christ his Redeemer; the Spirit of Grace his Sanctifier; and all the children of virtue are his brethren. In the present world he is only a stranger and a sojourner: he regards it, therefore, as a mere lodging; and fixes his eye on heaven as his home.

With this new character, all things, with which he here converses, assume, to his eye, a new aspect; and are filled with the presence and agency of God. *The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. The year*, in all its revolutions, *is crowned with his goodness*. The Spring is his beauty, blooming in endless varieties of elegance and splendour. Summer and Autumn are manifestations of his bounty; filling his creatures

with good. The Winter is a solemn display of his majesty. Then *the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*

In his *own* blessings the Christian sees God in a manner still more delightful. His blessings are not mere enjoyments: they are gifts; unspeakably endeared by the Hand from which they flow. When he is in prosperity; *The Lord is his Shepherd, who maketh him to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth him beside the still waters; who prepareth a table before him in the presence of his enemies, who anointeth his head with oil; who causeth his cup to run over, and goodness and mercy to follow him all the days of his life.* Is he in adversity? *The rod and staff of the same Shepherd support and comfort him.* Is he in doubt and darkness, where he is scarcely able to trace the path of life? He hears *a voice behind him, saying, This is the way: walk thou therein.* Is he *mourning in Zion?* God *appoints to him beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning.* Is he sick? God is his physician; and has already taught him to say, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Has he come to a dying bed? Christ has vanquished *death and the grave;* and has taught him to sing at their approach, *O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?* Has he friends? *God has raised them up.* Has he children? They *are an heritage from the Lord.* Is the land of his nativity safe? God is *a wall of fire round about it.* Does Religion flourish? God is *the glory in the midst of it.* The Church, to which he is united, is *a garden, which the Lord hath planted.* Is it enlightened, quickened, and edified? It *is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Is it comforted? The consolations have come down from the heavenly Comforter. Is it protected? *The Lord hath created upon Mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies, a cloud and a smoke by day, and a light of a flaming fire by night.*

Thus to the Christian all things in heaven and earth are full of God. Wherever he walks, wherever he is, he is surrounded with His presence; and *in that presence there is abundance of joy.* To Him, in his meditations, and in his worship, he instinctively turns, as the supreme Object of his affections, and of his obedience. In loving, fearing, and serving Him, *with all the heart*, he finds his chief delight; and becomes continually able, with more and more propriety and truth, to say, *Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon the earth, whom I desire, beside thee?*

III. *The Christian rejoices in Spiritual things universally.*

*Spiritual things*, are those, in which the power of the Spirit of grace is peculiarly visible; and which, therefore, have a peculiar tendency to improve us in the Christian character. In all things of this nature the Christian finds a peculiar joy. Particularly in

*the Word of God* he discovers multiplied streams of pure and increasing pleasure. Here all the transporting things, already mentioned, are made known to mankind. Here are disclosed the character, designs, and works, of the Creator; the rebellion, guilt, and condemnation, of man; and his restoration by forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love. Here the means of grace and salvation are revealed; the truths which we are to believe, and the precepts which we are to obey. Here *life and immortality are brought to light* by the Redeemer; and the path, which leads to them, is pointed out by the finger of God. The Bible is a window in this prison of hope, through which we look into eternity. It is the door of heaven, through which, opened by a divine hand, we cast our view into that glorious region; and behold the beauty, splendour, and happiness, which reign and triumph there for ever.

Here the Christian finds himself most mercifully checked in the hour of temptation by the threatenings of the law, and divinely allured to righteousness by promises and invitations. Behind him, Justice displays its *flaming sword*, to prevent him from returning to the by-paths of sin. Before him, Mercy calls, with the music of heaven, and the smile of Infinite love, to quicken his course in the highway of holiness.

*In the Worship of the same glorious Being*, the same delight is experienced, and with enhanced enjoyment. In his *closet*, like *Moses*, he *converses with God face to face;* and, while he spreads all his wants and woes, all his sins and dangers, all his hopes and joys, before him, is assured of an *open reward*. In his *family*, when his nearest connexions are around him, he finds every comfort endeared by these beloved objects; and sweetened by the remembrance, that his *house is a house of God*. In *the Sanctuary*, he unites with his fellow christians *to ask counsel at the mercy-seat*, and to present before it prayers and praises, refined and exalted by Evangelical sympathy. Here, also, all his virtuous affections and purposes are purified, and strengthened, by the heavenly influence of the holy day, and the holy place. Here grace is given, and glory anticipated.

*At the Table of Christ*, and in *the celebration of Baptism*, his soul is refreshed and revived by the sight of the dying Saviour, expiating his sins, and of the Spirit of God, symbolically poured out as a divine cleansing, to purify his heart from moral pollution. Earth, here, borrows the aspect of heaven; and sublunary things are invested with no small degree of immortal beauty.

*In the Church of God*, he sees a real, though imperfect, picture of *the general Assembly of the first-born*. All Christians are his brethren, and fellow-travellers with him towards the heavenly kingdom, in *the straight and narrow way that leads to life*. Their character, their hearts, their interests, their designs, are one. They are members of one family. They have *one Father, even God:* they have *one Lord*, even *Christ:* they have one Sanctifier, and

one Comforter, even *the Spirit of grace*. Their hopes and fears, their doubts and discoveries, their joys and sorrows, are the same. On all, the same Divine image is instamped; the same Evangelical beauty is visible. *Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their death they are not divided.*

IV. *The Christian finds an exalted pleasure in the good, enjoyed by others.*

In his view no truth is clearer, than that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive.* With this truth he cheerfully accords; and finds in doing good to others a humble share of the same delight, which is enjoyed by the universal Benefactor in the overflowings of Infinite beneficence to the Creation. Nor is his enjoyment less exquisite, when good is done by those around him. In them, as in him, real, disinterested beneficence is a proof of sanctification. If the beneficence be *not* disinterested; he still possesses the joy of seeing his fellow-creatures made happy.

In the diffusion of the *divine* beneficence, also, he experiences a perpetual delight; while he beholds the illustrious exhibitions of the goodness of God, and shares in the comfort of all, on whom it descends. Especially is this enjoyment exquisite, when sinners *are brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Then, souls, guilty and debased, condemned and ruined, are redeemed from everlasting sin and wo. Then, heaven is enlarged by the accession of new inhabitants; and the *joy*, which is felt in that benevolent world over repenting sinners, trembles delightfully through his own bosom. The sight of a sanctified mind, of a redeemed and forgiven sinner, of endless virtue and immortal life begun, is the fairest and most enchanting prospect, ever seen in the great kingdom of Jehovah.

V. *The Joy of the Christian, in this world, is the beginning of Everlasting Joy.*

*To be spiritually minded is* both *life and peace.* This mind is the mind of every Christian. Of course, *life and peace* eternal are begun in him, while he resides in this evil and melancholy world.

There are, indeed, many interruptions, diminutions, and preventions, of this glorious possession, accomplished by remaining sin, and its inseparable companion, *sorrow of heart.* But in the midst of all these he finds consolation, often abundant, almost unceasing, and always sufficient for his wants. The promises of the Gospel, are continually before him. God he knows, *will never leave* him, *nor forsake* him. Christ, he knows, will *always be with him unto the end.* He may, indeed, be *cast down, but* he will *not* be *destroyed:* he may be *afflicted, but* he will *not be forsaken. The Father of the spirit* may, indeed, *smite him in his wrath for a small moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on him.* In every gloomy and distressing day there will be gleams of sunshine, and openings of a serene, unclouded heaven. *In the dry and thirsty ground, where there is* apparently *no water,* and in the midst of a

desolation visibly without limits, *the wilderness will* suddenly *rejoice and blossom as the rose.*

His piety is a seed, sown here in an unkind, barren soil indeed, and under a wintry climate; but it will live, and grow, until it shall be transplanted to a happier region beneath a more friendly sky: where it will shoot forth in its native strength and beauty. The flame of divine love, kindled feebly in his heart, will never cease to burn, until it shall rise, and glow, with unextinguishable ardour, beyond the grave. The light, which here dawns in darkness, and feebly illumines the surrounding gloom, will perpetually *shine brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day.* All his sins and sorrows will continually lessen, and recede, and fade: all his graces, consolations, and hopes, will expand, and improve: until the imperfect good, which he finds in this *vale of tears,* shall be lost in the everlasting beauty, happiness, and glory, of heaven.

# SERMON LXXXVI.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—INCREASE OF GRACE.

PROVERBS iv. 18.—*The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

IN the last discourse I considered at large the *fourth Consequence of Regeneration.* I shall now proceed to examine two other Consequences of this great change in man; commonly termed, *Increase of Grace*, and *Perseverence to the end.*

In the text the progress of the renewed man in holiness of character, is compared to the dawning light of the morning; which, barely perceptible at first, increases by gradations, also barely perceptible, until the Sun, ascending above the horizon, sheds over the face of the earth the full beams of day.

By this image we are naturally taught the following things.

I. *That the holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object:*

II. *That it increases as he advances in life:* and,

III. *That it continues to the end.*

I. *The holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object.*

The views, which David, who uttered the instructions, contained in this chapter, and which *Solomon*, who under the influence of inspiration repeated them to *us*, formed of this evangelical subject, are sufficiently manifested in the text. It is here compared to the most beautiful of all the objects in the natural world, presented to us in the most beautiful form: viz. the light of the sun, succeeding the darkness of the night, and advancing through a most elegant and delightful progress to the splendour of the perfect day. What this illustrious object is in the natural system, the holiness of the Christian is in the moral system.

In a similar manner it is spoken of throughout the Scriptures. It is styled by Christ the *pearl of great price.* It is said by *David* to be *more precious than thousands of gold, and of silver.* It is said by *Job, that it cannot be gotten for gold; that silver shall not be weighed for the price thereof; that it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir; the precious onyx, or the sapphire; that no mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls; that the price of wisdom is above rubies;* and that its *fame has been repeated* in the regions of *death* and *destruction.* It is styled by *Moses* the *beauty, and glory, of God* himself. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children: And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.*

In conformity to these declarations, those, who possess this character, are styled *the excellent of the earth, in whom God delights;*

*chosen; wise; children of God; followers of Christ; born of the Spirit; the precious Sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold; children of light; heirs of God; and brethren of Christ.* In all these appellations, the moral beauty, the loveliness of mind, possessed by Christians, as it appears to the eye of God, is strongly conspicuous; and its inestimable value is exhibited in the most forcible terms, of which language is capable.

When we consider this subject in its own proper nature, and as viewed by human Reason, we cannot but acknowledge the justice of the Scriptural representations. The Spirit, infused into man at his renovation, has been heretofore exhibited as the only voluntary source of happiness. This being admitted, as by unbiassed reason it must be; no words can adequately describe either the excellence, the beauty, or the loveliness, of this disposition. Its value is of course proportioned to the good, of which it is the spring; and to this no limits can be affixed. In whatever degree it exists, and however humble it may be, it still partakes of the common nature. The gold may exist in particles of dust: still it is gold; and superior, both in value and lustre, to all the dross in the universe. He, who consecrates his faculties, however small they may be, to the glory of God, and the good of the Intelligent creation, possesses the angelic character; and is not an angel, only because his powers are inferior, and his disposition mixed, and hitherto imperfect.

But there is something, still, to be added to the beauty of the Christian character. The Christian, as has been uniformly taught in these discourses, is, in this world, imperfectly holy. From his remaining sin arise to him many circumstances, incompatible with a state of perfection. Many temptations, many difficulties, and many sorrows, spring up in his progress towards heaven, which a glorified spirit cannot know. In his struggles with these; in the resolution with which he meets, and encounters, his spiritual enemies; in his contentions with *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;* in his steady dependence on God; in his faithful prayers for Divine aid; in his patience, submission, and fortitude, under sufferings; in his firm faith in the Divine promises, and in his cheerful resignation of himself into the hands of God; there is often manifested a beauty and amiableness of character, which is probably seen in no other world beside this; but which must be approved, and admired, in every world, where wisdom is allowed to decide.

In all the meek and lowly virtues of the Christian character there is something pre-eminently delightful, and endearing. I know not whether there is any character, more strikingly beautiful and lovely, than that of a penitent. Children, it seems to me, never interest us so deeply by any amiableness, and are never regarded with such peculiar endearment, as when they come to us with an ingenuous, cordial sorrow for their faults; a cheerful con

fession; and unfeigned designs of amendment. Such in a peculiar degree is the charming aspect of Christian Penitence. On it *the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth Eternity*, has declared himself pleased to *look;* and over it the joy of heaven is exquisitely enhanced.

II. *The holiness of the Christian increases as he advances in life.*

The very nature of the subject leads us, in a sense irresistibly, to the adoption of this doctrine. The regeneration of the Christian is his moral infancy. If we suppose him to live through even a moderate period after he is renewed; it is incredible, that his holiness should not increase in strength. The evangelical powers, (if I may call them such) as certainly increase by the progress of time, and by successive exercise, as the natural powers. Indeed, the increase of the natural powers is, of course, an increase of those which are evangelical. Every illumination of the mind, every new degree of capacity, which it acquires by thinking, for more just and comprehensive thought, renders the intellect more vigorous for every future exertion. The Word of God is to the Christian the chief object of intellectual investigation. The truths, which it reveals, are those, on which he especially loves to dwell, and about which his mind is peculiarly enlightened by successive inquiry. It is here, that his capacity is enlarged, and his intellectual strength increased.

In a manner equally natural, his Affections, also, improve in their energy. Parents love their children more intensely because they have loved them long. In the same manner friendship is continually strengthened by time; and in the same manner all our other affections. What is true of these is equally true of evangelical affections. They, also, in their own nature become more firm, more vigorous, more operative, from the mere fact, that they are often exercised. So far as Experience teaches us, or Reason is able to divine, all the powers of intelligent beings, by a common law, increase in their strength, whenever they are regularly exercised.

With these dictates of Reason those of the Scriptures perfectly harmonize. Were this not the fact, however plain the conclusions of Reason might seem, they would probably fall short of satisfying a solicitous inquirer into this subject. By the Scriptures every question concerning Religion is to be decided; and happily the decision in the present case is complete. There we are taught, that *the good seed*, the Word of God, when sown in good ground, *springs up*, and *bears fruit, thirty, sixty*, and *an hundred fold.* There we are informed, that Christians *abound more and more* in the various graces of the Gospel: that *the faith of the Thessalonians grew exceedingly;* that *the love of every one of them abounded towards their fellow-saints;* and that *the faith of the Romans increased in such a manner*, as to be *spoken of throughout all the world.*

The *Prayers of St. Paul*, also, for his fellow-christians; prayers, dictated, as you will remember, by the Spirit of God; perfectly coincide with this scheme. *The Lord*, said he to the *Thessalonians*, *make you to increase, and to abound, in love one toward another, and toward all men.* To the *Colossians* he says, *We do not cease to pray for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding; that ye may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.* Of the same tenour are his petitions for Christians of other Churches.

With these Declarations, and Prayers, the *Commands*, given us in the Scriptures concerning this subject, entirely agree. *Giving all diligence*, says the Apostle *Peter*, *add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.* And again; *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This one thing I do*, says *St. Paul* to the *Philippians*, *forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ. Brethren, be followers together of me.* Generally it may be observed, that the precepts, and exhortations, given by *St. Paul* to the several Churches, are of the same nature: the great object of them being to promote the advancement of Christians in holiness.

Finally. Of this advancement, thus made the subject of declarations, prayers, and precepts, the Christian is amply assured by *Promises*, abundantly found in the Scriptures. If he faithfully endeavours to improve himself in the Divine life; if he humbly and fervently ask the blessing of God upon his labours; he knows, that on the one hand the grace of God will be sufficient for him; and, on the other, that this Almighty friend *will never leave him, nor forsake him.* That holy and good Spirit, the immediate Author of all his spiritual blessings, will dwell in him; will lead him; will help his infirmities; and finally and safely conduct him to the possession of his heavenly inheritance. Thus, while he faithfully *waits on the Lord*, he will *renew his strength; will run, and not be weary; will walk, and not faint.*

The truth of the doctrine under consideration may now be considered as removed beyond every doubt; if, indeed, any doubt can be supposed to have arisen concerning the subject. Still, it is of no small importance, that we not only receive the general proposition, but understand, also, the particulars, of which it is constituted; the things of which this improvement of the Christian character consists. I observe, therefore,

1st. *That the Christian increases in Divine Knowledge.*

Particularly, he will improve in *the knowledge of God.*

By this I do not intend, that he will advance in the philosophical knowledge of this great and glorious Being. In this knowledge he indeed may, and usually will, increase; and so may multitudes of those who are not Christians. The knowledge, here intended, is especially of a spiritual nature; that which is called by Solomon *the knowledge of the holy;* the knowledge, which our Saviour declares *to be eternal life;* the knowledge, which is possessed only by those who love God, and is essentially derived from their affection to him. As the Christian reads the *Bible*, which will ever be one of his favourite employments, he will find God, the great subject of it, every where exhibited to his view; and exhibited continually in lights, ever varying from each other. In the succession, and in the comparison, of an endless multitude of passages, all of them diverse, and all of them instructive, he will continually gain new apprehensions of the greatness and wisdom, the goodness, mercy, and truth, of the Being, from whom he derived his own existence, and from whom he receives all his blessings.

These apprehensions will be enlarged, and improved, by his attention to *the works of Creation and Providence.* The works of God are always full of instruction to those who read, and love, his Word. Every person, who peruses the Psalms with attention, must have observed how much instruction, and what elevated affections and purposes, David acquired from this source. Here, like David, every devout mind will see clearly elucidated the truth, reasonableness, and wisdom, of very many Scriptural doctrines; the propriety, and excellence, of very many precepts; the cogency of very many motives to his duty; and the fulfilment of very many predictions, and promises. These, in innumerable instances, although unregarded by men of this world, will force themselves hourly, and irresistibly, on the eye of the Christian: for they are all congenial with his wishes, hopes, and designs; and to dwell upon them will be his peculiar delight.

The dispensations of God to himself, his family, his friends, and his country, will in a peculiar manner cast a new light over all these interesting subjects. Whatever immediately concerns ourselves, and ours, becomes of course an object of our minute attention. As it is more thoroughly studied, so it is necessarily better understood, than the same things contained in dispensations to others. In our own blessings, and afflictions, many exhibitions are made to us of the character of God; and many proofs of his wisdom, goodness, and truth, are realized, which will hardly be derived from any other source. Here our Maker is seen in a thousand lights of providential care and kindness, as our Preserver and Benefactor; as the proper object of ultimate hope, and confidence; of which we should have known little or nothing from any other source. At the same time, this knowledge is deeply endeared to us, or solemnly impressed, by the events which disclose it; and is therefore deeply felt, and long remembered. Hence it becomes a part of

our current thoughts; and is ready to be applied on every proper occasion to every useful purpose. In this manner the mind becomes enriched with a train of the most useful views, solid arguments, and important doctrines; which raise it from its former level to a nobler elevation on the scale of Intelligent being; and furnish it for a higher enjoyment, and more extensive usefulness, in the kingdom of its Maker.

In a similar manner Christians improve in the knowledge of their duty. All the duty of the Christian is originally learned from the Scriptures. As his acquaintance with this Sacred Volume enlarges, the precepts, which comprise the whole of his duty, are more and more known, remembered, compared, and made to elucidate each other. These from time to time he applies to his own practical concerns; and thus, as they pass under his eye from day to day, he learns more accurately the nature, extent, and spirituality, of the precepts themselves, and the safest and best modes of applying to them the conduct of his life. In this manner the Scriptural precepts may be said to be always at hand; always ready for use; so as to guide him safely, and happily, in many cases, where others would be compelled to struggle with doubt and perplexity.

It ought to be added, that the knowledge of the Christian, acquired immediately from Scripture, and from his own experience, is greatly increased by the conversation of his fellow-Christians, and by the valuable books, written by wise and good men concerning the subjects of Religion.

Finally: Christians greatly improve in the knowledge of themselves.

The importance of *self-knowledge* is so obvious, that the ancient heathen considered the precept, which enjoins it, as having descended from heaven. They were not deceived: for the Scriptures directly require us to *examine ourselves*, *to prove ourselves*, and *to know ourselves*. A part of this knowledge, and that indispensable, is conveyed to us in the Sacred Canon; and this the Christian makes more and more his own by continually searching for it in that invaluable book. But indispensable as this knowledge is, it is comparatively of little importance to the Christian, until he has learned its proper import by applying it to his own spiritual condition; to the discovery of his true character; to the detection of his sins; to the investigation of his duty; to the excitement of his fears; to the establishment of his hopes; the alleviation of his sorrows, and the increase of his joys. This knowledge the Christian can gain only by *Self-examination;* by looking daily into his heart; by scrutinizing his life; and by comparing all that he thinks, and feels, and says, and does, with the rules of his duty, prescribed in the Word of God.

In this manner the best of men will learn, that they are, in many respects, widely different beings from what an ordinary and gross attention to this part of their duty would induce them to believe.

They will discern, that they commit many sins, where otherwise they would suppose themselves guilty of few; that many actions, which they have before thought innocent, are really sinful; that sinful actions are much more criminal than they have been accustomed to believe: that their virtuous actions are fewer, less meritorious, and less acceptable to God, than they have been ready to suppose; and that themselves are much farther than they have been aware, from the perfection required by the Scriptures. In this very manner, there is reason to believe, *St. Paul* arrived at those just views of his own character, which are expressed in the latter part of the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans; and in this manner Christians in every age and country have acquired almost all the self-knowledge which they have ever possessed.

By these efforts the good man acquires much more just, as well as more humble, apprehensions of what he is; discerns that *in many things* he, and all others, *offend;* that in every thing he *comes short of the praise*, that is, *the approbation, of God;* that in his best services there is much to lament, and much to be forgiven: and that new zeal, watchfulness, faithfulness, and prayer, are daily demanded of him, both by his interest, and by his duty. At the same time he clearly perceives the indispensable necessity of being more humble, submissive, diligent, prayerful; less censorious towards others; less attentive to the little, and more to the great, concerns of the Christian life; more patient, gentle, meek, and amiable; and more strenuous in his opposition to every lust, temptation, and enemy.

2dly. *The Christian improves in his Affections.*

By the great change, which was made in his character, when of a sinner he became a Christian, styled in the Scriptures Regeneration, and denoted by several other names, of an import generally similar, his affections were for the first time turned from the world to God. At this period his spiritual views were very limited, and imperfect; and his affections, in an infantine state. Every exercise of them was a kind of novelty; a thing, to which he had not been accustomed, and therefore performed, if I may be allowed the term, crudely. Ardent, and even violent, they might be, and at times probably were; but not steady, and firm; partaking more of the sudden, and desultory, character of the natural passions, than of the settled energy of an established habit; and resembling more in their operations the unequal efforts of a raw recruit, than the regular advances of a veteran. In every such case there is usually much of the earth, mingled with a little of heaven. Joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, at this time often, perhaps usually, abound; and those in some instances excessive. But we are apt to look in vain for a stable, uniform course of life; the energy, which is customarily ready to act, and act with vigour; the serious consideration, by which it is taught to operate usefully; and the serenity, by which it is most naturally accompanied. In vain shall

we here search, in ordinary cases, for that sober fear, which, always awake, most usefully warns us of the approach of temptation, and the danger of sin; for that fixed hope, which *quietly*, as well as humbly, *waits for the salvation of God;* for those calm and determined purposes of duty, which are unremittedly carried into execution; and for those milder, and more endearing, joys, and that more regularly recurring peace, which are found by a mind well disciplined to the Christian life. Hope, here, is apt suddenly to give place to fear, and sometimes to despondency; zeal, to be succeeded by indifference; and the most brilliant sunshine, to be overcast by clouds and gloom. It will be readily admitted, that such a state is in many respects undesirable.

As the Christian advances in his progress, all these things often, to say the least, are materially changed. The exercise of his pious affections, instead of being new, and occasional, becomes by frequent repetition a habit. His love to God is by degrees changed into the settled temper, the fixed energy, of his soul. More calm, more uniform, though less violent, it acquires a strength, a stability, which nothing violent ever possessed. Where new and ardent converts will tremble, and bend, and even be overturned; he will stand immoveable; and will thus prove, that he is *deeply rooted in the faith.* Of the same fixed nature will be his affections towards his fellow-men. The *benevolence*, which *is the fulfilment of* the second command of *the moral law*, holds an even course, in the mind of the Christian, with his love to God; and increases in its stability, and energy, in the same manner, by becoming habitual. Originally, the exercises of this affection, those, at least, which were vigorous, and therefore objects of particular attention to the mind, were occasional, and in a comparative sense solitary. Like all other occasional things, they were at times weaker, or stronger, according to the circumstances by which they were attended. They were also brought into existence, often at least, against motives of considerable efficacy against the intrusion of other affections, of a worldly nature; the power of prejudice; the calls of business; the care, and the apprehended interests, of one's family; the spirit of a sect, or party; and the pride of self-consistency. The man, also, has hitherto known very imperfectly the pleasure, which springs from the exercise of benevolence; and, therefore, very imperfectly realizes the pleasure, which he may find in exercising it again. His former passions, and habits, still retain much of their ancient hold upon him; and still influence not a little of his conduct. Hence, his benevolence is in many instances greatly impeded; and in many others prevented, perhaps, from operating at all.

From all these disadvantages the Christian in his progrees through life gradually escapes; and acquires gradually the contrary advantages. His love to his fellow-men becomes by degrees a habit, more and more fixed, uniform, and ever ready to operate.

With every exercise it gains strength. The pleasure, which it yields, is more uniformly found; and exists in a higher degree. Hence it is more regularly exercised; and in all its exercises are more efficacious.

The same things are equally true of the Christian's opposition to sin. By the superior knowledge which he acquires of the nature of this *evil and bitter thing*, and by his experience of the pain, and sorrow, which are its regular consequences, he learns to regard it with habitual hatred and fear. His eye, therefore, is watchfully open to mark the approach of temptation, and *the appearance of evil*.

In a similar manner, also, increases the Christian's *attachment to his duty*. Attachment to our duty necessarily bears a direct proportion to our hatred of sin; for, every voluntary, or negligent, omission of known duty, is itself a sin. All our duty, also, is obedience to God; and a love to it increases, of course, with our love to God. *This is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments.* The pleasure, also, of performing our duty, and the strength of habit, generated by it, will lend their whole force to increase this attachment. But the time forbids me to expatiate on this part of the subject.

3dly. *Christians improve, also, in Purity, and Amiableness of life.*

If the things, which have been observed under the former heads, be admitted, this will be perceived to follow of course. He, whose affections become better, will, in a sense, necessarily live a better life. Wherever love to God prevails in greater degrees; devotion, public, private, and secret, will regularly be performed in a manner more regular, more sincere, more pure, and more acceptable. Wherever love to man increases in strength; truth will be more exactly spoken; justice more uniformly done; beneficence more widely diffused; and the forgiveness of enemies more cheerfully yielded. In persons of whom this is the character, the pain of self-denial will in a great measure vanish; and to communicate to others our property, and our services, will be attended with little, or none, of that reluctance, but too commonly visible even in good men. In a word, the Christian is taught by his own experience, as he had before been taught by his Saviour, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

It is, however, carefully to be remembered, that *all these desirable things are wrought into the Christian's mind, and life, by the power of the Holy Spirit.* We *work out* our *salvation with fear, and trembling*, when *God works in us to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.* Without the influence of this Divine Agent, nothing comparatively would be done; but, with it, the Christian will himself labour both vigorously, and successfully. For his encouragement, let him remember, that, whenever he is himself willing to lay strong hold on his duty, and will seek for the assistance of this

glorious Agent, he has the best reasons to believe, that it will not be denied.

It ought, also, to be added in this place, that realizing views of the approach of death, judgment, and eternity, will have a powerful influence to quicken the efforts, which the Christian makes for his advancement in holiness.

In conformity to these observations, we see Christians actually growing better and better, as they advance through life. We see them more pious; more benevolent; more self-denying; more humble; more weaned from the world; more spiritually-minded; and universally possessed in higher degrees of the disposition, which fits them to become inhabitants of heaven. It obviously costs them less to be meek under provocations, and patient under injuries, to part with their property, or employ their labour, for charitable purposes. The smaller troubles of life sit lighter upon them; and the greater, they endure with more resignation, and fortitude. Universally, they are more solicitous concerning their duty, and less studious of their own convenience. There is, therefore, more to be approved, and less to be blamed, in the conduct of their lives.

It is not intended here, that this is the regular, and uniform, tenour of the Christian life. The improvement of the Christian character is unquestionably, to a greater or less degree, irregular and interrupted; in some Christians indeed less, and in others more. Some backslide in a melancholy, and shameful manner, and for periods comparatively long; while others appear to advance with a steady, and regular, approximation towards the measure of the perfect man.

Neither is it intended, that cold, careless, lazy Christians will find the blessings, which have been mentioned in this discourse. *The diligent hand maketh rich* in spiritual, as well as in temporal, good. He, who wishes to secure these blessings, must on the one hand watch and pray, and on the other, *do whatsoever he findeth to do with his might.*

Among the attainments, made by such as have been Christians for a length of time, I will mention one; and will then conclude the discourse. This is, *that they are almost universally more Catholic than those who are young.* By *catholic* here, I do not mean what in modern times is frequently meant by the word. This honourable term, like many others, has been purloined by men without worth, to denote, and to ornament, a part of their own unworthy character. It has been employed to designate a shameful indifference to truth and error, to virtue and sin. This is a direct contrast to the spirit of the men, of whom I have been speaking. These men are more attached to truth, and more opposed to error; more ardent in their love to virtue and their hatred of sin. But they are possessed of more gentleness, and more charitableness, in their thoughts; more candour in their judgments; more sweet-

ness in their dispositions; and more evangelical tenderness, and moderation, in their conduct. They are less ready to censure, and more pleased to commend. Truth they prize more for its own sake; and are less solicitous to ask from whom it comes. Error they oppose in all men; especially in themselves, and their friends. Little things they value less, and great ones more. On the names, so numerously found in the Christian world, and so highly valued by many who inhabit it, they place little importance. On the parties, and sects, which disgrace that world, they look only with disapprobation, and regret. To real and Evangelical worth they attach high consideration. Over the feuds, and janglings, which have so extensively prevailed among the professed followers of Christ, and often about subjects of little moment, they cast an eye of compassion; and lament, that those, whom Christ has loved; for whom he died; who will finally be placed at the right hand of the Judge; and who will be united for ever in the friendship of heaven; should be kept asunder, alienated, engaged in contention, and at times even embarked in hostilities, for reasons, which they will blush to recite before the last tribunal, and which will awaken shame, if shame can be awakened, in Heaven itself.

These men furnish one illustrious practical proof, that *the holiness of Christians increases through life.*

END OF VOL. II.